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LEISURE HOUR SERIES.

MY LITTLE LADY

Thy sinless progress, through a world
By sorrow darken'd and by care disturbed,
Apt likeness bears to hers through gather'd clouds
Moving untouch'd in silver purity.

WORDSWORTH.

NEW YORK
HOLT & WILLIAMS
1872

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1873, Sept. 24.
Gift of
Nathan H. Dole,
of Norridgewock, Me.
(H. C. 1874.)

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TO

J. C. I.

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MY LITTLE LADY.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

In the Garden.

THERE are certain days in the lives of each one of us which come in their due course without special warning, which we look forward with no anticipation of peculiar joy or sorrow, from which beforehand we neither demand nor expect more than the ordinary portion of good and evil, and which yet through some occurrence—unconsidered perhaps at the moment, but gaining in significance with years and connecting events—are destined to live apart in our memories to the end of our existence. Such a day in Horace Graham's life was a certain hot Sunday in August, that he spent at the big hotel at Chaudfontaine.

Every traveller along the great high road leading from Brussels to Cologne knows Chaudfontaine, the little village distant about six miles from Liége, with its church, its big hotel, and its scattered cottages, partly forges, partly restaurants, which shine white against a dark green background of wooded hills, and gleam reflected in the clear tranquil stream by which they stand. On every side the hills seem to fold over and enclose the quiet green valley; the stream winds and turns, the long poplar-bordered road follows its course; among the hills are more valleys, more streams, woods, forests, sheltered nooks, tall gray limestone rocks, spaces of corn-fields, and bright meadows. Every one admires the charming scenery as the train speeds across it, through one tunnel after another; but there are few among our country-

men who care to give it more than a passing glance of admiration, or to tarry in the quiet little village even for an hour, in their great annual rush to Spa, or the Rhine, or Switzerland. As a rule one seldom meets Englishmen at Chaudfontaine, and it was quite by chance that Horace Graham found himself there. An accident to a goods train had caused a detention of several hours all along the line, as he was travelling to Brussels, and it was by the advice of a Belgian fellow-passenger that he had stopped at Chaudfontaine, instead of going on to Liége, as he had at first proposed doing, on hearing from the guard that it was the farthest point that could be reached that night.

Behind the hotel lies a sunshiny shady garden, with benches and tables set under the trees near the house, and beyond, an unkempt lawn, a sort of wilderness of grass and shrubs and trees, with clumps of dark and light foliage against the more uniform green of the surrounding hills, and it was still cool and pleasant when Graham wandered into it after breakfast on that Sunday morning, while all in front of the hotel was already basking in the hot sunshine. He had gone to bed the night before with the fixed intention of leaving by the earliest morning train, for his first impressions of Chaudfontaine had not been cheerful ones. It was nearly midnight when, with his companions, he had crossed the bridge that connects the railway station with the hotel on the opposite side of the stream, and scarcely a light was shining from the windows of the dim white building before him; he was very tired, rather cross, and disposed to grumble at the delay in his journey; and the general aspect of things—the bad supper, the sleepy waiter carrying a candle up flights of broad shallow wooden stairs, and down a long passage to a remote room barely furnished, the uncertain view of a foreground of rustling poplars, and close behind them a black silent mass of hill—all these had not tended to encourage him.

But a man must be very cynical, or very *blasé*, or wholly possessed by some other uncomfortable quality, who does not feel much cheered and invigorated by morning sunbeams pouring into a strange bed-room, and awakening him to new scenes and unexperienced sensations. Horace Graham was

neither cynical nor *blasé;* on the contrary, he was a pleasant-tempered, fresh-hearted lad of twenty or thereabouts, who only three weeks before had made his first acquaintance with French gendarmes, and for the first time had heard children shouting to each other in a foreign tongue along white-walled, sunshiny, foreign streets. Three weeks touring in Germany had only served to arouse in him a passion for travelling and seeing, for new places and peoples and scenes, that in all his life, perhaps, would not be satiated; everything was new to him, everything amused him; and so it happened that, while he was dressing and studying from his window the view that had been only obscurely hinted at in the darkness of the night before, a sudden desire came over him to remain where he was for that day, climb the hills that rose before him, and see what manner of country lay beyond.

It was still early when, after breakfasting by himself in the salle-à-manger, he found his way into the garden; no one was stirring. it seemed deserted; he wandered along the gravel paths, trod down the tall grass as he crossed the lawn, and arrived at the confines of the little domain. On two sides it was bounded by a narrow stream, separating it from the road beyond; at the angle of the garden the shallow, trickling water widened into a little fall crossed by a few planks; there were trees and bushes on each side, and the grassy garden bank sloped down to the stream. It was very green, and peaceful and dewy. Horace stood still for a minute looking at the flickering lights and shadows, and watching the dash and current of the water.

"*Fi donc, Mademoiselle, tu n'es pas raisonnable,*" cries a sweet shrill little voice close to him, "*tu es vraiment insupportable aujourd'hui.*"

He turned round and saw a child between five and six years old, dressed in a shabby little merino frock and white pinafore, standing with her back towards him, and holding out a doll at arm's length, its turned-out pink leather toes just touching the ground.

"*Veux-tu bien être sage?*" continues the small monitress with much severity, "*encore une fois, un, deux, trois!*" and she made a little dancing-step backwards; then with an air

of encouragement, "*Allons, mon amie, du courage!*" We must be perfect in our steps for this evening, for you know, Sophie, if you refuse to dance, M. le Prince will be in despair, and M. le Baron will put his hand on his heart and cry, 'Alas! mademoiselle, you have no pity, and my heart is desolated!'"

"Madelon!" cries a voice through the trees in the distance.

"*Me voici*, papa!" she answered, stopping the dancing-lesson and looking round. As she did so she caught sight of Horace, and gazed up in his face with a child's deliberate stare. She had great brown eyes, a little round fair face, and light hair curling all over her head. She looked up at him quite fearlessly for a moment, and then darted away, dashing against somebody who was coming along the path, and disappeared.

"Take care, *ma petite;* you nearly knocked me down!" cried a good-humored voice, belonging to a large gentleman with a ruddy face, and black hair and beard. "Ah! good morning, Monsieur," he continued as he approached Horace; "I rejoice to see that you have not yet quitted Chaudfontaine, as you spoke of doing last night."

"I have changed my mind," said Horace, smiling as he recognized his fellow-traveller of the night before. "I think of staying here to-day, and not leaving for Brussels till to-morrow morning."

"You will not regret it," said his companion, as they turned back towards the hotel, and walked on slowly together; "it is true there is not much here to tempt you during the day, but numbers will arrive for the four o'clock *table-d'hôte*. In the evening there will be quite a little society, and we shall dance. I assure you, Monsieur, that we also know how to be gay at Chaudfontaine."

"I don't doubt it," answered Graham; "and though I don't care much about dancing—"

"You don't care about dancing!" interrupted the Belgian with astonishment; "but that is of your nation, Monsieur. You are truly an extraordinary people, you English: you travel, you climb, you ride, you walk, and you do not dance!"

"I think we dance too, sometimes," said the young Englishman laughing; "but I own that it is walking I care for most just now—the country about here seems to be wonderfully pretty."

"In fact it is not bad," said the Belgian, with the air of paying it a compliment; "and if you take care to return in time for the four o'clock *table-d'hôte*, you cannot do better than make a little promenade to gain an appetite for dinner. I can promise you an excellent one—they keep an admirable cook. I entreat of you not to think of leaving for Brussels; and precisely you cannot go," he added, drawing out his watch, "for it is just the hour that the train leaves, and I hear the whistle at this moment."

And, in fact, though they could not see the train from where they stood, they heard its shrill whistle as it rushed into the station on the other side of the river.

"So it is decided," said Graham, "and I remain."

"And you do wisely, Monsieur," cried his companion; "believe me, you will not regret passing a day in this charming little spot. Do they speak much in England of Chaudfontaine, Monsieur?"

"Well, no," Horace was obliged to acknowledge, "they do not."

"Ah!" said the Belgian, a little disappointed; "but they speak of Brussels, perhaps?"

"Oh! yes, every one knows Brussels," answered Graham.

"It is a beautiful city," remarked his companion, "and has a brilliant society; but for my part, I own that at this season of the year I prefer the retirement, the tranquillity of Chaudfontaine, where also one amuses oneself perfectly well. I always spend two or three months here—in fact, have been here for six weeks already this summer. Affairs called me to Aix-la-Chapelle last week for a few days, and that was how I had the good fortune to meet Monsieur last night."

"It was very lucky for me," said Horace. "I am delighted to be here. The hotel seems to be very empty," he added. "I have seen nobody this morning except one little girl."

"But no, the hotel is almost full—people are gone to

mass, perhaps, or are in bed, or are breakfasting. It is still early."

"That little girl," said Horace—"does she belong to the house?"

"You mean the little girl who ran against me as I came up to you just now? No, the *propriétaire* of the hotel has but one daughter, Mademoiselle Cécile, a most amiable person. But I know that child—her father is one of the *habitués* of the hotel. She is much to be pitied, poor little one!"

"Why?" asked Graham.

"Because her father—*ah! bon jour, Madame*—excuse me, Monsieur, but I go to pay my respects to Madame la Comtesse!" cried the Belgian, as an elderly red-faced lady, with fuzzy sandy hair, wearing a dingy, many-flounced lilac barége gown, came towards them along the gravel path.

"At last we see you back, my dear Monsieur!" she cried—"ah! how many regrets your absence has caused! —of what an insupportable *ennui* have we not been the victims! But you are looking better than when you left us; your journey has done you good; it is plain that you have not suffered from absence."

"Alas! Madame," cries the other, "you little know! And how, for my part, can I venture to believe in regrets that have left no traces? Madame is looking more charming, more blooming—"

Horace waited to hear no more; he left the pair standing and complimenting each other on the sunny pathway, and wandered away under the shade of the big trees, crossed the little stream and the white dusty road beyond, and began to ascend the hills.

"What an ugly old woman!" thought the lad. "She and my friend seem to be great allies; she must be at least ten years older than he is, and he talks to her as if she were a pretty girl; but she is a countess apparently, and I suppose that counts for something. Oh! what a jolly country!"

He strode along whistling, with his hands in his pockets, feeling as if he had the world before him to explore, and in the happiest of moods. Such a mood was not rare with Horace Graham in these youthful days, when, by force of

good health, and good spirits, and a large capacity for fresh genuine enjoyment, he was apt to find life pleasant enough on the whole, though for him it lacked several of the things that go to make up the ordinary ideal of human happiness. He was not rich; he had no particular expectations, and but few family ties, for his parents had both died when he was very young, and except an aunt who had brought him up, and a married sister several years older than himself, he had no near relations in the world. He was simply a medical student, with nothing to look forward to but pushing his own way, and making his own path in life as best he could. But he had plenty of talent, and worked hard at his profession, to which he was devoted for reasons quite unconnected with any considerations of possible profit and loss. Indeed, having just enough money of his own to make him tolerably independent, he was wont to ignore all such considerations in his grand youthful way, and to look upon his profession from a purely abstract scientific point of view. And yet he was not without large hopes, grand vague ambitions concerning his future career; for he was at an age when it seems so much easier to become one of the few enumerated great ones of the world than to remain among the nameless forgotten multitudes; and life lay before him rather as something definite, which he could take up and fashion to his own pleasure, than as a succession of days and years which would inevitably mould and influence him in their course. It is not wholly conceit, perhaps, which so assures these clever lads of the vastness of their untried capabilities, that there are moments when they feel as if they could grasp heaven and earth in their wide consciousness; it is rather a want of experience and clearness of perception. Horace Graham was not particularly conceited, and yet, in common with many other men of his age, he had a conviction that, in some way or other, life had great exceptional prizes in store for him; and indeed he was so strong, and young, and honest-hearted, that he had been successful enough hitherto within his narrow limits. He had pleasant manners, too, and a pleasant face, which gained him as many friends as he ever cared to have; for he had a queer, reserved, unsociable twist in his character, which kept him aloof from much company, and

rather spoilt his reputation for geniality and heartiness. He hated the hard work he had to go through in society; so at least he was wont to grumble, and then would add, laughing. "I daresay I am a conceited puppy to say so: but the fact is, there are not six people in the world whose company I would prefer to my own for a whole day."

He found his own company quite sufficient during all his wanderings through that long summer's day in the lovely country round Chaudfontaine—a country neither grand nor wild, hardly romantic, but with a charm of its own that enticed Graham onwards in spite of the hot August sun. It was so green, so peaceful, so out of the world; the little valleys were wrapped so closely among the hills, the streams came gushing out of the limestone rocks, dry water-courses led him higher and higher up among the silent woods, which stretched away for miles on either hand. Sometimes he would come upon an open space, whence he could look down upon the broader valley beneath, with its quiet river flowing through the midst, reflecting white villages, forges, long rows of poplars, an occasional bridge, and here and there a long low island; or descending, he would find himself in some narrow ravine, cleft between gray rocky heights overgrown with brushwood and trailing plants, the road leading beside a marshy brook, full of rushes and forget-me-nots, and disappearing among the forest trees. All day long Graham wandered about that pleasant land, and it was long past the four o'clock dinner hour when he stood on the top of the hill he had seen that morning from his window, and looked across the wide view of woods and corn-fields to where a distant cloud of smoke marked the city of Liége. Thence descending by a steep zig-zag path, with a bench at every angle, he crossed the road and the little rivulet, and found himself once more in the garden at the back of the hotel.

CHAPTER II.

In the Salon.

He had left it in the morning dewy, silent, almost deserted; he found it full of gayety and life and movement, talking, laughing, and smoking going on, pretty bright dresses glancing among the trees, children swinging under the great branches, the flickering lights and shadows dancing on their white frocks and curly heads, white-capped bonnes dangling their *bébés*, papas drinking coffee and liqueurs at the little tables, mammas talking the latest Liége scandal, and discussing the newest Parisian fashions. The *table-d'hôte* dinner was just over, and everybody had come out to enjoy the air, till it was time for the dancing to begin.

The glass door leading into the passage that ran through the house stood wide open; so did the great hall door at the other end; and Graham could see the court-yard full of sunshine, the iron railing separating it from the road, the river gleaming, the bridge and railway-station beyond, and then again the background of hills. He passed through the house, and went out into the court-yard. Here were more people, more gay dresses, gossip, cigars, and coffee; more benches and tables set in the scanty shade of the formal round-topped trees that stood in square green boxes round the paved quadrangle. Outside in the road, a boy with a monkey stood grinding a melancholy organ; the sun seemed setting to the pretty pathetic tune, which mingled not inharmoniously with the hum of voices and sudden bursts of laughter; the children were jumping and dancing to their lengthening shadows, but with a measured glee, so as not to disturb too seriously the elaborate combination of starch and ribbon and shining plaits which composed their fête-day toilettes. A small tottering thing of two years old, emulating its compan-

ions of larger growth, toppled over and fell lamenting at Graham's feet as he came out. He picked it up, and set it straight again, and then, to console it, found a *sou*, and showed it how to put it into the monkey's brown skinny hand, till the child screamed with delight instead of woe. The lad had a kind, loving heart, and was tender to all helpless appealing things, and more especially to little children.

He stood watching the pretty glowing scene for a few minutes, and then went in to his solitary *réchauffé* dinner. Coming out again half an hour or so later, he found everything changed. The monkey-boy and his organ were gone, the sun had set, twilight and mists were gathering in the valley, and the court-yard was deserted; but across the gray dusk, light was streaming through the muslin window curtains of the salon, the noise of laughter, and voices, and music came from within now, breaking the evening stillness; for everyone had gone indoors to the salon, where the gas was lighted, chairs and tables pushed out of the way, and Mademoiselle Cécile, the fat good-natured daughter of the *propriétaire*, already seated at the piano. The hall outside fills with grinning waiters and maids, who have their share of the fun as they look in through the open door. Round go the dancers, sliding and twirling on the smooth polished floor, and Mademoiselle Cécile's fingers fly indefatigably over the keys, as she sits nodding her head to the music, and smiling as each familiar face glides past her.

Horace, who, after lingering awhile in the court-yard, had come indoors like the rest of the world, stood apart at the further end of the room, sufficiently entertained with looking on at the scene, which had the charm of novelty to his English eyes, and commenting to himself on the appearance of the dancers.

"But you do wrong not to dance, dear Monsieur, I assure you," said his Belgian friend, coming up to him at the end of a polka, with the elderly Countess, who with her dingy lilac barége gown exchanged for a dingier lilac silk, and her sandy hair fuzzier than ever, had been dancing vigorously. "Mademoiselle Cécile's music is delicious," he continued, "it positively inspires one; let me persuade you to attempt just one little dance."

"Indeed, I would rather look on," said Horace; "I can listen to Mademoiselle Cécile's music all the same, and I do not care much for dancing, as I told you; besides, I don't know any one here."

"If that be all," cried the other eagerly, "I can introduce you to half a dozen partners in a moment; that lady that I have just been dancing with, for instance, will be charmed—"

"Stop, I entreat you," said the young Englishman, in alarm, as his friend was about to rush off; "I cannot indeed —I assure you I am a very bad dancer; I am tired with my long walk, too."

"Ah, that walk," said the Belgian, "I did wrong in advising you to take it; you prolonged it till you missed the *table-d'hôte* dinner, and now you are too much fatigued to dance."

"But I am very much amused as it is, I assure you," insisted Graham. "Do tell me something about all these people. Are they all stopping at the hotel?"

His companion was delighted to give any information in his power. No, not a third of the people were stopping at the hotel, the greater part had come over from Liége, and would go back there by the ten o'clock train.

"Then you do not know many of them?" Graham said.

"No," the Belgian admitted, "he did not know many of them; only those who were staying at Chaudfontaine. That lady he had just been dancing with, Monsieur had seen in the morning, he believed; she was the Countess G——, a most distinguished person with blood-royal in her veins, and came from Brussels. That pretty girl in blue was Mademoiselle Sophie L——, who was going to be married next month to one of the largest proprietors in the neighborhood, the young man standing by her, who was paying her so much attention. The odd-looking man in shoes and buckles was a rising genius, or thought himself so, a violinist, who came over occasionally from Liége, and hoped to make his fortune some day in London or Paris; and perhaps he will do so," says the Belgian, "for he has talent. That little dirty-looking young man with a hooked nose, and the red Turkish slippers, is a Spaniard going through a course of studies at

Liége; he is staying in the hotel, and so are the fat old gentleman and lady seated on the sofa; they are Brazilians, and he has been sent over by his government to purchase arms, I believe. Those three young ladies in white are sisters, and are come here from Antwerp for the summer; that is their mother talking to Mademoiselle Cécile. I see no one else at this moment," he added, looking slowly round the room at the groups of dancers who stood chattering and fanning themselves in the interval between the dances.

"Who is that?" asked Graham, directing his attention to a gentleman who had just appeared, and was standing, leaning in the doorway opposite.

He was a tall handsome man, with light hair, and a long fair mustache and beard, perfectly well dressed, and with an air sufficiently distinguished to make him at once conspicuous among the Liége clerks and shopkeepers, of whom a large part of the company consisted.

"Ah! precisely, Monsieur, you have fixed upon the most remarkable personage here," cried his companion, with some excitement; "but is it possible you do not know him?"

"I never saw him before," answered Graham. "Is he a celebrity?—a prince, or an ambassador, or anything of that kind?"

"No, nothing of that kind," said the other laughing, "but a celebrity nevertheless in his way. That is M. Linders, the great gambler."

"I never even heard of him," said the young Englishman; "but then I don't know much about such people."

"It is true, I had forgotten that Monsieur is not of this country; but you would hear enough about him were you to stay any time at Wiesbaden, or Homburg, or Spa, or any of those places. He twice broke the bank at Homburg last year, won two hundred thousand francs at Spa this summer, and lost them again the next week. He is a most dangerous fellow, and positively dreaded by the proprietors of the tables."

"What! when he loses two hundred thousand francs?"

"Ah! that is a thing that rarely happens; as a rule he is perfectly cool, which is the principal thing at these t[illegible]

plays when the run is in his favor, and stops when it is against him ; but occasionally he gets excited, and then of course the chances are that he loses everything like another."

"What can he be doing here?" said Graham.

"Who knows? Stopping a night or two on his way to Paris, or Brussels, perhaps, on the chance of finding some one here with enough, and imprudent enough, to make it worth his while. You do not play, Monsieur?"

"Never in that way," answered the lad laughing; "I can get through a game of whist decently enough, but I rarely touch cards at all."

"Ah, then you are safe ; otherwise I would have said avoid M. Linders ; he has not the best reputation in the world, and he has a brother-in-law who generally travels with him, and is even a greater rogue than himself, but not so lucky—so they say at least."

"Do you know him, this famous gambler? He does not look much like one," said Graham.

"That is true ; but he is a man of good birth and education, I believe; though he has turned out such a *mauvais sujet*, and it is part of his *métier* to get himself up in that style. Yes, I know him a little, from meeting him here and elsewhere ; he is always going about, sometimes *en prince*, sometimes in a more humble way—but excuse me, dear Monsieur, Mademoiselle Cécile has begun to play, and I am engaged to Mademoiselle Sophie, for this dance ; she will never forgive me if I make her wait."

The dancers whirled on ; the room grew hotter and hotter. M. Linders had disappeared, and Graham began to think that he too had had almost enough of it all, and that it would be pleasant to seek peace and coolness in the deserted moonlit court-yard. He was watching for a pause in the waltz that would admit of his crossing the room, when his attention was attracted by the same little girl he had seen that morning in the garden. She was still dressed in the shabby old frock and pinafore, and as she came creeping in, threading her way deftly among the young ladies in starched muslins and gay ribbons, who were fluttering about, she made the effect of a little brown moth who had strayed into the midst of a swarm of brilliant butterflies.

No one took any notice of her, and she made her way up to the large round table which had been pushed into the far corner of the room, and near which Graham was standing.

"Do you want anything?" he asked, as he saw her raise herself on tiptoe and stretch forward over the table.

"I want *that*," she said, pointing to a miniature roulette-board, which stood in the middle beyond the reach of her small arm.

He gave it to her, and then stood watching to see what she would do with it. She set to work with great deliberation; first pulling a handful of sugar-plums out of her pocket, and arranging them in a little heap at her side on the table, and then proceeding with much gravity to stake them on the numbers. She would put down a bonbon, and give the board a twirl; "*vingt-cinq*," she would say; the ball flew round and fell into a number; it might be ten, or twenty, or twenty-five, it did not much matter; she looked to see what it was, but right or wrong, never failed to eat the bonbon—an illogical result, which contrasted quaintly with the intense seriousness with which she made her stakes. Sometimes she would place two or three sugar-plums on one number, always naming it aloud—"*trente-et-un*," "*douze-premier*," "*douze-après*." It was the oddest game for a small thing not six years old; and there was something odd, too, in her matter-of-fact, business-like air, which amused Graham. He had seen gambling-tables during his three weeks' visit to Germany, and he felt sure that this child must have seen them too.

"Eh! what an insupportable heat!" cried a harsh high-pitched voice behind them. "Monsieur Jules, I will repose myself for a few minutes, if you will have the goodness to fetch me a glass of *eau sucrée*. *Je n'en puex plus!*"

Graham, recognizing the voice, turned around, and saw the Countess G—— leaning on the arm of a young man with whom she had been dancing.

"But it is really stifling!" she exclaimed, dropping into an arm-chair by the table as her partner retired. "Monsieur does not dance, apparently," she continued, addressing Horace. "Well, you are perhaps right; it is a delightful amusement, but on a night like this— Ah! here is

little Madelon. I have not seen you before to-day. How is it you are not dancing?"

"I don't want to," answered the child, giving the roulette-board a twirl.

"But that is not at all a pretty game that you have there," said the Countess, shaking her head; "it was not for little girls that Mademoiselle Cécile placed the roulette-board there. Where is your doll?—why are you not playing with her?"

"My doll is in bed; and I like this best," answered the child indifferently. "*Encore ce malheureux trente-six! Je n'ai pas de chance ce soir!*"

"But little girls should not like what is naughty; and I think it would be much better if you were in bed too. Come, give me that ugly toy; there is Monsieur quite shocked to see you playing with it."

Madelon looked up into Horace's face with her wide open gaze, as if to verify this wonderful assertion, and apparently satisfied that it had been made for the sake of effect, continued her game without making any reply.

"Oh, then, I really must take it away," said the Countess; "*allons*, be reasonable, *ma petite;* let me have that, and go and dance with the other little boys and girls."

"But I don't want to dance, and I like to play at this," cries Madelon with her shrill little voice, clutching the board with both her small hands, as the Countess tried to get possession of it; "you have no right to take it away. Papa lets me play with it; and I don't care for you! Give it me back again, I say; *je le veux, je le veux!*"

"No, no," answered the Countess, pushing it beyond Madelon's reach to the other side of the table. "I daresay you have seen your papa play at that game; but children must not always do the same as their papas. Now, be good, and eat your bonbons like a sensible child."

"I will not eat them if I may not play for them!" cried the child; and with one sweep of her hand she sent them all off the table on to the floor, and stamped on them again and again with her tiny foot. "You have no right to speak to me so!" she went on energetically; "no one but my papa speaks to me; and I don't know you, and I don't like

you, and you are very ugly!" and then she turned her back on the Countess and stood in dignified silence.

"*Mais c'est un petit diable!*" cried the astonished lady, fanning herself vigorously with her pocket-handkerchief. She was discomforted though she had won the victory, and hailed the return of her partner with the *eau sucrée* as a relief. "A thousand thanks, M. Jules! What if we take another turn, though this room really is of an insufferable heat."

Madelon was left confronting Horace, a most ill-used little girl, not crying, but with flushed cheeks and pouting lips—a little girl who had lost her game and her bonbons, and felt at war with all the world in consequence. Horace was sorry for her; he, too, thought she had been ill-used, and no sooner was the Countess fairly off than he said, very immorally, no doubt:

"Would you like to have your game back again?"

"No," said Madelon, in whom this speech roused a fresh sense of injury; "I have no more bonbons."

Graham had none to offer her, and a silence ensued, during which she stood leaning against the table, slowly scraping one foot backwards and forwards over the remains of the scattered bonbons. At last he bethought him of a small bunch of charms that he had got somewhere, and hung to his watch-chain, and with which he had often enticed and won the hearts of children.

"Would you like to come and look at these?" he said, holding them up.

"No," she replied, ungraciously, and retreating a step backwards.

"Not at this!" he said. "Here is a little steam-engine that runs on wheels; and, see, here is a fan that will open and shut."

"No," she said again, with a determined little shake of her head, and still retreating.

"But only look at this," he said, selecting a little flexible enamel fish, and trying to lure back this small wild bird. "See this little gold and green fish, it moves its head and tail."

"No," she said once more, but the fish was evidently

temptation, and she paused irresolute for a moment; but Graham made a step forward, and this decided her.

"I don't care for *breloques*," she said, with disdain, "and I don't want to see them, I tell you." And then, turning round, she marched straight out of the room.

At that moment the music stopped, the waltzing ceased, and a line of retreat was left open for Graham. He saw the Countess once more approaching, and availed himself of it; out of the noise and heat and crowd he fled, into the fresh open air of the quiet court-yard.

CHAPTER III.

In the Court-yard.

THREE gentlemen with cigars, sitting on the bench under the salon windows, two more pacing up and down in the moonlight before the hall-door, and a sixth apparently asleep in a shadowy corner, were the only occupants of the court-yard. Graham passed them by, and sought solitude at the lower end, where he found a seat on the stone coping of the iron railing. The peace and coolness and silence were refreshing, after the heat and clamor of the salon; the broad harvest-moon had risen above the opposite ridge of hills, and flooded everything with clear light, the river gleamed and sparkled, the poplars threw long still shadows across the white road; now and then the leaves rustled faintly, some far-off voice echoed back from the hills, and presently from the hotel the sound of the music, and the measured beat of feet, came softened to the ear, mingled with the low rush of the stream, and the ceaseless ringing of the hammers in the village forges.

Horace had not sat there above ten minutes, and was debating whether—his Belgian friend notwithstanding—a stroll along the river-bank would not be a pleasanter termination to his evening than a return to the dancing, when he saw a small figure appear in the hall doorway, stand a moment as if irresolute, and then come slowly across the court-yard towards him. As she came near he recognized little Madelon. She paused when she was within a yard or two of him, and stood contemplating him with her hands clasped behind her back.

"So you have come out too," he said.

"*Mais oui—tout ce tapage m'agace les nerfs*," answered the child, pushing her hair off her forehead with one of her old-fashioned little gestures, and then standing mo-

tionless as before, her hands behind her, and her eyes fixed on Graham. Somehow he felt strangely attracted by this odd little child, with her quaint vehement ways and speeches, who stood gazing at him with a look half *farouche*, half confiding, in her great brown eyes.

"Monsieur," she began, at last.

"Well," said Graham.

"Monsieur, I *would* like to see the little green fish. May I look at it?"

"To be sure," he answered. "Come here, and I will show it to you."

"And, Monsieur, I do like *breloques* very much," continues Madelon, feeling that this is a moment for confession.

"Very well, then, you can look at all these. See, here is the little fish to begin with."

"And may I have it in my own hand to look at?" she asked, willing to come to some terms before capitulating.

"Yes, you shall have it to hold in your own hand, if you will come here."

She came close to him then, unclasping her hands, and holding out a tiny palm to receive the little trinket.

Horace was engaged in unfastening it from the rest of the bunch, and while doing so he said:

"Will you not tell me your name? Madelon, is it not?"

"My name is Madeleine, but papa and every one call me Madelon."

"Madeleine what?"

"Madeleine Linders."

"Linders!" cried Horace, suddenly enlightened; "what, is M. Linders—" the famous gambler he had nearly said, but checked himself—"is that tall gentleman with a beard, whom I saw in the salon just now, your papa?"

"Yes, that is my papa. Please may I have that now?"

He put the little flexible toy into her hand, and she stood gazing at it for a moment, almost afraid to touch it, and then pushing it gently backwards and forwards with one finger.

"It does move!" she cried delighted. "I never saw one like it before."

"Would you like to keep it?" asked Graham.

"Always, do you mean?—for my very own?"

"Yes, always."

"Ah, yes!" she cried, "I should like it very much. I will wear it around my neck with a string, and love it so much,—better than Sophie."

She looked at it with great admiration as it glittered in the moonlight; but her next question fairly took Horace aback.

"Is it worth a great deal of money, Monsieur?" she inquired.

"Why, no, not a great deal—very little, in fact," he replied.

"Ah! then, I will beg papa to let me keep it always, always, and not take it away."

"I daresay he will let you keep it, if you tell him you like it," said Graham, not clearly understanding her meaning.

"Oh! yes, but then he often gives me pretty things, and then sometimes he says he must take them away again, because they are worth so much money. I don't mind, you know, if he wants them; but I will ask him to let me keep this."

"And what becomes of all your pretty things?"

"I don't know; I have none now," she answered, "we left them behind at Spa. Do you know one reason why I would not dance to-night?" she added, lowering her voice confidentially.

"No; what was it?"

"Because I had not my blue silk frock with lace, that I wear at the balls at Wiesbaden and Spa. I can dance, you know, papa taught me; but not in this old frock, and I left my other at Spa."

"And what were your other reasons?" asked Graham, wondering more and more at the small specimen of humanity before him.

"Oh! because the room here is so small and crowded. At Wiesbaden there are rooms large—so large—quite like this court-yard," extending her small arms by way of giving expression to her vague sense of grandeur; "and looking-glasses all round, and crimson sofas, and gold chandeliers,

and ladies in such beautiful dresses, and officers who danced with me. I don't know any one here."

"And who were the Count and the Prince you were talking about to Mademoiselle Sophie in the garden this morning?"

Madelon looked disconcerted.

"I shan't tell you," she said, hanging down her head.

"Will you not? Not if I want to know very much?"

She hesitated a moment, and then burst forth—

"Well, then, they were just nobody at all. I was only talking make-believe to Sophie, that she might do the steps properly."

"Oh! then, you did not expect to see them here this evening?"

"Here!" cries Madelon, with much contempt; "why, no. One meets nothing but *bourgeois* here."

Graham was infinitely amused.

"Am I a *bourgeois?*" he said, laughing.

"I don't know," she replied, looking at him; "but you are not a milord, I know, for I heard papa asking Mademoiselle Cécile about you, and she said you were not a milord at all."

"So you care for nothing but Counts and Princes?"

"I don't know," she said again. Then with an evident sense that such abstract propositions would involve her beyond her depth, she added, "Have you any other pretty things to show me? I should like to see what else you have on your chain."

In five minutes more they were fast friends, and Madelon, seated on Graham's knee, was chattering away, and recounting to him all the history of her short life. He was not long in perceiving that her father was the beginning and end of all her ideas—her one standard of perfection, the one medium through which, small as she was, she was learning to look out on and estimate the world, and receiving her first impressions of life. She had no mother, she said, in answer to Graham's inquiries. *Maman* had died when she was quite a little baby: and though she seemed to have some dim, faint recollection of having once lived in a cottage in the country, with a woman to take care of her, everything

else referred to her father, from her first, vague floating memories to the time when she could date them as distinct and well-defined facts. She had once had a nurse, she said,—a long time ago that was, when she was little—but papa did not like her, and so she went away; and now she was too big for one. Papa did everything for her, it appeared, from putting her to sleep at night, when Mademoiselle was disposed to be wakeful, to nursing her when she was ill, taking her to fêtes on grand holidays, buying her pretty things, walking with her, teaching her dancing, and singing, and reading; and she loved him so much—ah! so much! Indeed, in all the world, the child had but one object for a child's boundless powers of trust and love and veneration, and that one was her father.

"And where do you generally live now?" asked Graham.

"Why, nowhere in particular," Madelon answered. "Of course not—they were always travelling about. Papa had to go to a great many places. They had come last from Spa, and before that they had been at Wiesbaden and Homburg, and last winter they had spent at Nice: and now they were on their way to Paris."

"And do you and your papa always live alone? Have you not an uncle?" inquired Graham, remembering the Belgian's speech about the brother-in-law.

"Oh! yes, there is Uncle Charles—he comes with us generally; but sometimes he goes away, and then I am so glad."

"How is that?—are you not fond of him?"

"No," said Madelon, "I don't like him at all; he is very disagreeable, and teases me. And he is always wanting me to go away; he says, 'Adolphe'—that is papa, you know—'when is that child going to school?' But papa pays no attention to him, for he is never going to send me away: he told me so, and he says he could not get on without me at all."

Graham no longer wondered at Madelon's choice of a game, for it appeared she was in the habit of accompanying her father every evening to the gambling tables, when they were at any of the watering-places he frequented.

"Sometimes we go away into the ball-room and dance," she said, "that is when papa is losing; he says, 'Madelon, *mon enfant*, I see we shall do nothing here to-night, let us go and dance.' But sometimes he does nothing but win, and then we stop till the table closes, and he makes a great deal of money. Do you ever make money in that way, Monsieur?" she added naïvely.

"Indeed I do not," replied Graham.

"It is true that every one has not the same way," said the child, with an air of being well-informed, and evidently regarding her father's way as a profession like another, only superior to most. "What do you do, Monsieur?"

"I am going to be a doctor, Madelon."

"A doctor," she said reflecting; "I do not think that can be a good way. I only know one doctor, who cured me when I was ill last winter; but I know a great many gentlemen who make money like papa. Can you make a fortune with ten francs, Monsieur?"

"I don't think I ever tried," answered Horace.

"Ah well, papa can; I have often heard him say, 'Give me only ten francs, *et je ferai fortune!*'"

There was something at once so droll and so sad about this child, with her precocious knowledge and ignorant simplicity, that the lad's honest tender heart was touched with a sudden pity as he listened to her artless chatter. He was almost glad when her confidences drifted away to more child-like subjects of interest, and she told him about her toys, and books, and pictures, and songs; she could sing a great many songs, she said, but Horace could not persuade her to let him hear one.

"Why do you talk French?" she said presently; "you speak it so funnily. I can talk English."

"Can you?" said Horace laughing, for indeed he spoke French with a fine English accent and idiom. "Let me hear you. Where did you learn it?"

"Uncle Charles taught me; he is English," she answered, speaking correctly enough, with a pretty little accent.

"Indeed!" cried Graham. "Your mother was English, then?"

"Yes. Mamma came from England, papa says, and Uncle Charles almost always talks English to me. I would not let him do it, only papa wished me to learn."

"And have you any other relations in England?"

"I don't know," she answered. "We have never been in England, and papa says he will never go, for he detests the English; but I only know Uncle Charles and you, and I like you."

"What is your Uncle Charles' other name? Can you tell me?"

"Leroy," she answered promptly.

"But that is not an English name," said Graham.

This was a little beyond Madelon, but after some consideration, she said with much simplicity:

"I don't know whether it is not English. But it is only lately his name has been Leroy, since he came back from a journey he made; before that it was something else, I forget what, but I heard him tell papa he would like to be called Leroy, as it was a common name; and papa told me in case any one asked me."

"I understand," said Graham; and indeed he did understand, and felt a growing compassion for the poor little girl, whose only companions and protectors were a gambler and a sharper.

They were still talking, when the silence of the courtyard was broken by a sudden confusion and bustle. The sound of the music and dancing had already ceased; and now a medley of voices, a shrill clamor of talking and calling, made themselves heard through the open hall door.

"Henri! Henri! ou est-il donc, ce petit drôle?"

"Allons, Pauline, dépêche toi, mon enfant, ton père nous attends!"

"Ciel! j'ai perdu mon fichu et mes gants."

"Enfin."

"The people are going away," says Madelon; and, in fact, in another minute the whole party, talking, laughing, hurrying, came screaming out by twos and threes into the moonlight, and, crossing the road and bridge, disappeared one by one in the station beyond, the sound of their voices still echoing back through the quiet night. The last had

hardly vanished when a tall solitary figure appeared in the court-yard, and advanced, looking round as if searching for some one.

"Madelon!" cried the same voice that Graham had heard that morning in the garden.

"There is papa looking for me; I must go," exclaimed the child at the same moment; and before Graham had time to speak, she had slipped off his knee and darted up to her father, then taking his hand, the two went off together, the small figure jumping and dancing by the side of the tall man as they disappeared within the doorway of the hotel.

A few minutes more, and then a sound as of distant thunder told that the train was approaching through the tunnel. Graham watched it emerge, traverse the clear moonlit valley with slackening speed, and pause at the station for its freight of passengers. There was a vague sound of confusion as the people took their places, and then with a parting shriek it set off again; and as the sound died away in the distance, a great stillness succeeded the noise and bustle of a few moments before.

Horace was afraid he had seen the last of Madelon, for returning to the hotel he found no one in the salon, with the exception of Mademoiselle Cécile, who was already putting out the lights. The hall, too, was deserted; the servants had vanished, and the *habitués* of the hotel had apparently gone to bed, for he met no one as he passed along, and turned down the passage leading to the salle-à-manger. This was a large long room, occupying the whole ground floor of one wing of the hotel, with windows looking out on one side into the court-yard, on the other into the garden, two long tables, smaller ones in the space between, and above them a row of chandeliers smothered in pink and yellow paper roses. The room looked bare and deserted enough now; a sleepy waiter lounged at the further end, the trees in the garden rustled and waved to and fro in the rising night breeze, the moonlight streamed through the uncurtained windows on to the boarded floor and white table-cloths, chasing the darkness into remote corners, and contending with the light of the single lamp which stood on

one of the smaller tables, where two men were sitting, drinking, smoking, and playing at cards.

One of them was a man between thirty and forty, in a tight-fitting black coat buttoned up to his chin, and with a thin face, smooth shaven, with the exception of a little yellow mustache, and sharp gray eyes. He would have been handsome, had it not been for his unpleasant expression, at once knowing and suspicious. The other Horace immediately recognized as Monsieur Linders; and a moment afterwards he perceived little Madeleine, sitting nestled close up to her father's side. The lamp-light shone on her curly head and innocent *mignonne* face as she watched the game with eager eyes; it was piquant, and she was marking for her father, and when he had a higher score than his opponent, she laughed and clapped her hands with delight.

Graham stood watching this little scene for a minute; and somehow, as he looked at the little motherless girl, there came the thought of small rosy children he knew far away in England, who, having said their prayers, and repeated their Sunday hymns, perhaps, had been tucked into little white beds, and been fast asleep hours ago; and a kind, foolish notion entered the young fellow's head that, for that one evening at least, he must get the brown-eyed child, who had taken his fancy so much, away from the drinking, and smoking, and card-playing, into a purer atmosphere. He went up to the table, and leant over her chair.

"Will you come out again, and have a walk with me in the garden?" he said in English.

The man opposite, who was dealing, looked up sharply and suspiciously. Madelon turned round, and gazed up into the kind face smiling down on her, then shook her head with great decision.

"Not a little walk? I will tell you such pretty stories, all about fairies, and moonlight, and little boys and girls, and dragons," said Horace, drawing largely on his imagination, in his desire to offer a sufficient inducement.

"No," said Madelon, "I can't come; I am marking for papa."

"What is it?" said M. Linders, who understood very little English; "what does this gentleman want, *mon enfant?*"

"I was asking your little girl if she would take a walk with me in the garden," says Horace, getting rather red, and in his bad French.

"Monsieur is too good," answers M. Linders, making a grand bow, while his companion, having finished dealing, sat puffing away at his cigar, and drumming impatiently with his fingers on the table; "but the hour is rather late; what do you say, Madelon? Will you go with Monsieur?"

"No, papa," says the child, "I am marking for you; I don't want to go away."

"You see how it is, Monsieur," said M. Linders, turning to Graham with a smile and a shrug. "This little one thinks herself of so much importance, that she will not leave me."

"Are you then mad," cried his companion, "that you think of letting Madelon go out at this time of night? It is nearly eleven o'clock, and she can hardly keep her eyes open."

"My eyes are wide, wide open, Uncle Charles," exclaimed Madelon, indignantly; "I'm not a bit tired, but I don't want to go out now."

"Monsieur will perhaps join our party," said Monsieur Linders, very politely. "I should be delighted to try my luck with a fresh adversary."

"Thank you," said Graham, "but I hardly ever touch cards." Then turning to Madelon, he added, "I must go away now, since you will not come for a walk. Won't you wish me good-bye? I shall not be here to-morrow."

She turned round and put her little hand into his for a moment; then with a sudden shy caprice snatched it away, and hid her face on her father's shoulder, just peeping at him with her bright eyes. But she started up again suddenly as he was leaving the room, calling out, "*Adieu, Monsieur, bon voyage,*" and kissing her hand to him. He smiled and nodded in return, bowed to M. Linders, and so went away There was a moment's silence after he went, and then, "You have made a fine acquaintance this evening, Madelon," said her uncle.

Madelon made a little *moue*, but did not answer.

"Are you then mad, Adolphe," he said again, "that you

permit Madeleine to pick up an acquaintance with any one who chooses to speak to her? An Englishman, too!"

"Papa is not mad," cried Madelon, between whom and her uncle there was apparently a standing skirmish. "He was a very kind gentleman, and I like him very much; he gave me this little gold-fish, and I shall keep it always, always!" and she kissed it with effusion.

"Bah!" said M. Linders, "English or French, it is all one to me; and what harm could he do to the little one? It was an accident; but it does not matter for once. Come, Madelon, you have forgotten to mark."

"It is your turn to deal next, papa," said the child, "may I do it for you?"

Horace Graham left Chaudfontaine by the earliest train the following morning; and of all the people he had seen on that Sunday evening at the hotel, only two ever crossed his path again in after years—M. Linders, and his little daughter, Madeleine.

CHAPTER IV.

Retrospect.

M. LINDERS was of both Belgian and French extraction, his father having been a native of Liége, his mother a Parisian of good family, who, in a moment of misplaced sentiment, as she was wont in after years to sigh, had consented to marry a handsome young Belgian officer, and had expiated her folly by spending the greater part of her married life at Malines, where her husband was stationed, and, at Liége, where his mother and sister resided. Adolphe's education, however, was wholly French; for Madame Linders, who, during her husband's life, had not ceased to mourn over her exile from her own city, lost no time, after his death, in returning to Paris with her two children, Thérèse, a girl of about twelve, and Adolphe, then a child five or six years old.

Madame Linders had money, but not much, and she made it go further than did ever Frenchwoman before, which is saying a great deal. Adolphe must be educated, Adolphe must be clothed, Adolphe was to be a great man some day; he was to go into the army, make himself a name, become a general, a marshal,—heaven knows what glories the mother did not dream for him, as she turned and twisted her old black silks, in the *entresol* in the Chaussée d'Antin, where she had her little apartment. She had friends in Paris, and must keep up appearances for Adolphe's sake, not to mention her own, and so could not possibly live in a cheap out-of-the-way quarter.

As for Thérèse, she was of infinitely small account in the family. She was plain, and not too amiable, nor particularly clever, and inclined to be *dévote;* and, as in spite of positive and negative failings, she also had to eat and be clothed as well as her handsome fair brother, she could be regarded

as nothing else than a burden in the economical household.

"You ask me what I shall do with Thérèse?" said Madame Linders one day to a confidential friend. "Oh! she will go in a convent, of course. I know of an excellent one near Liége, of which her aunt is the superior, and where she will be perfectly happy. She has a turn that way. What else can I do with her, my dear? To speak frankly, she is *laide à faire peur*, and she can have no *dot* worth mentioning, for I have not a sou to spare; so there is no chance of her marrying."

Thérèse knew her fate, and was resigned to it. As her mother said, she had a turn that way; and to the Liége convent she according went, but not before Madame Linders' death, which took place when her daughter was about seven-and- twenty, and which was, as Thérèse vehemently averred, occasioned by grief at her son's conduct.

Adolphe had also known the fate reserved for him, and was by no means resigned to it; for he had never had the least intention of becoming a soldier, and having escaped conscription, absolutely refused to enter the army. He was a clever, unprincipled lad, who had done well in his studies, but lost no time in getting into the most dissipated society he could find from the moment he left college. He inherited his father's good looks, but his mother's predilections apparently; for he set out in life with the determination to be a Parisian among Parisians—of a certain class, be it understood; and having some talent for drawing, as indeed he had for most things, he used it as a pretext, announced that he intended to be an artist, and furnishing a room in the Quartier Latin, with an easel and a pipe, he began the wild Bohemian life which he found most in accordance with his tastes.

He was selfish and reckless enough, but not altogether heartless, for he had a real affection for his mother, which might have been worked upon with advantage. But Madame Linders, who had indulged him till he had learnt to look upon her devotion as a thing of course, now turned upon him with the fretful, inconsequent reproaches of a weak mind; and finding that he was constantly met with

tearful words and aggrieved looks, her son avoided her as much as possible. His sister he could not endure. Thérèse had always been jealous of the marked preference shown for him; and now, with an evident sense of triumph, she preached little sermons, talked at him with unceasing perseverance, and in truth was not a very engaging person.

Madame Linders had not been dead ten days, when the brother and sister had a violent quarrel, and parted with the determination on either side never to meet again—a resolution which was perfectly well kept. Thérèse retired to the Belgian convent, and Adolphe, the possessor of a few thousand francs, the remains of his mother's small fortune, returned to his studio and to the life he had chosen.

The success and duration of a career of this sort is in exact proportion to the amount of capital, real or assumed, invested in it. Monsieur Linder's capital was very small; his francs and credit both were soon exhausted, and he began to find that making-believe to paint pictures was hardly a paying business. He tried to take portraits, attempted etching, gambled, and, finally, being more in debt than he could well afford, disappeared from the Paris world for a number of years, and for a long space was known and heard of no more. It was indeed affirmed in his circle of acquaintance that he had been seen playing a fiddle at one of the cheap theatres; that he had been recognized in the dress of a fiacre-driver, and in that of a waiter at a Café Chantant: but these reports were idly spread, and wanted confirmation. They might or might not have been true. M. Linders never cared to talk much of those seven or eight years in which he had effaced himself, as it were, from society; but it may be imagined that he went through some strange experiences in a life which was a struggle for bare existence. Respectable ways of gaining a livelihood he ever held in aversion; and it was not, therefore, to be expected that a foolish and unprofitable pride would interfere to prevent his using any means not absolutely criminal in order to reach any desired end.

At length, however, he emerged from obscurity, and rose once more to the surface of society; and one of his old acquaintance, who encountered him at Homburg, returned

marvelling to Paris to relate that he had seen Adolphe Linders winning fabulous sums at *trente-et-quarante*, that he was decently clothed, had a magnificent suite of apartments at one of the first hotels, and an English wife of wondrous beauty. Monsieur Linders had, in fact, sown his wild oats, so to speak, and settled down to the business of his life. In former days, gambling had been a passion with him—too much so, indeed, to admit of his playing with any great success; he had been apt to lose both temper and skill. Time, however, while increasing this passion for play, till it gradually became a neccessity of his life, had taught him to bring to bear upon it all the ability which would have eminently fitted him for some more praiseworthy employment. Formerly he had indulged in it as a diversion; now it became serious business, which he prosecuted with a cool head, determined will, and unfailing perseverance—qualities for which few would have given him credit in the wild unsettled period of his early career. The result was highly satisfactory to himself; he was soon known as one of the most successful haunters of the German and Belgian gaming-tables; he cast off the outward aspect and manners of the Bohemian set he had once affected, and assumed the guise and dress of the gentleman he really was—at least by birth and education—and which he found at once more profitable and more congenial to his maturer tastes. He lived splendidly, and spent money freely when he had it: incurred debts with great facility when he had not—debts which he did or did not pay, as the case might be.

It was during a winter spent in Brussels that he made the acquaintance of Charles Moore, a young Englishman with tastes identical with his own, but inferior to him in ability, talents, and even in principles. A sort of partnership was formed between them, Mr. Linders undertaking most of the work, and the Englishman contributing his small fortune as capital; and not only his own, but that of his sister Magdalen, a young girl who had come abroad with her brother, the only near relation she had in the world. M. Linders had been introduced to her, and she, in complete ignorance of the real character of either him or her brother Charles, had, with all the simplicity of eighteen, straightway fallen in

love with the handsome gentlemanlike man, who, on his side, made no secret of the impression produced on him by the great loveliness of the English girl. Moore, who was a thoroughly heartless scamp, had not the least compunction in agreeing to a marriage between his sister and this man, with whose character and mode of life he was perfectly well acquainted; indeed, it suited his views so well, that he did what lay in his power to forward it. There were no difficulties in the way; the two were almost alone in the world. He had been left her sole guardian by their old father, who had died a twelve-month before; and she, trusting her brother entirely, was glad to leave everything in his hands. The marriage was accomplished with all possible speed, and it was not till nearly two months later that an accident revealed to Magdalen Linders, what indeed in any case she must have discovered before long—what manner of man this was she had got for her husband.

Then she did not pine away, nor sicken with despair, being of a great courage, strong to bear evil and misfortune, and not made of the stuff that gives way under cruel deception and disappointment. She uttered only one reproach—

"You should have told me of all this, Adolphe," she said.

"You would not have married me," he replied gloomily.

"I—I do not know. Ah, I loved you so much, and so truly!"

And she did love him still; and clung to him to the last, but not the less was she broken-hearted, so far as any enjoyment of life was concerned; and her husband saw it. All sense of rejoicing seemed to die out of her heart for ever. She hated the splendor with which he sometimes surrounded her, even more than the paltry shifts and expedients to which at other times they had to resort, when he had spent all his money, and there was no more forthcoming for the moment: she wept when her children were born, thinking of the iniquity of the world they had entered; and when her two little boys died one after the other, there was almost a sense of relief mixed with the bitterness of her sorrow, as she reflected on the father she could not have taught them to respect, and on the abject evil and misery from which she could not have shielded them.

As for M. Linders, he at once adored and neglected his wife, as was the nature of the man; that is, he adored her theoretically for her rare beauty, but neglected her practically, when, after a few months of married life, he saw her bloom fading, and her animation vanish, in the utter despondency which had seized her, and which found its outward expression in a certain studied composure and coldness of manner. There soon came a time when he would have willingly freed himself altogether from the constraint of her presence. He travelled almost incessantly, spending the summer and autumn at the German watering-places; the winter in France, or Belgium, or Italy; and he would sometimes propose that she should remain at a Paris hotel till he could return to her. In the first years after their marriage she objected vehemently. She was so young, so unused to solitude, that she felt a certain terror at the prospect of being left alone; and, moreover, she still clung with a sort of desperation to her girlish illusions, and, loving her husband, could not cease to believe in his love for her. She had plans, too, for reforming him, and for a long time would not allow herself to be convinced of their utter vanity and hopelessness. After the death of her little boys, however, she became more indifferent, or more resigned. And so it came to pass that when she had been married about six years, and four months after her third child was born, Madame Linders died, alone at a Paris hotel, with no one near her but the doctor, her baby's nurse, and the woman of the house. She dictated a few words to tell her husband, who was then in Germany, that she was dying; and, stricken with a horrible remorse, he had travelled with all possible haste to Paris, and arrived at daybreak one morning to find that his wife had died the evening before.

Madame Linders' death had been caused by a fever, under which she had sunk rapidly at last. There had been no question of heart-breaking or pining grief here — so her husband thought with a sort of satisfaction even then, as he remembered his sister's words of bitter reproach over their mother's death-bed; and yet not the less, as he looked at his dead wife's face, did the reflection force itself upon him, that he had made the misery instead of the happiness of her

life. He was a man who had accustomed himself to view things from the hardest and most practical point of view; and from such a view his marriage had been rather a failure than otherwise, since the memory of the little fortune she had brought with her had vanished with the fortune itself. But it had not been altogether for money that he had married her; he had been in love with her at one time, and that time repeated itself, with a pertinacity not to be shaken off, as he stood now in her silent presence.

Whatever his feelings may have been, however, they found no expression then. He turned sharply on the women standing round, who had already, after the fashion of womankind, contrived, without speaking, to let him know their opinion of a man who had left his wife alone for six months at a hotel, while he went and amused himself. He scarcely glanced at the small daughter, now presented to him for the first time; and he bade Madame Lavaux, the mistress of the hotel, "make haste and finish with all that," when, with tearful voice, and discursive minuteness, she related to him the history of his wife's last days. He made all necessary arrangements; took possession of Madame Linders' watch and few trinkets; himself superintended the packing of her clothes and other trifling properties into a large trunk, which he left in Madame Lavaux's charge; attended the funeral on the following day; and immediately on his return from it, ordered a fiacre to be in readiness to convey him to the railway station, as he was going to quit Paris immediately. He was on the point of departure, when he was confronted by Madame Lavaux and the nurse bearing the infant, who begged to know if he had any directions to leave concerning his child.

"Madame," he answered, addressing the landlady, "I intrust all these matters to you; see that the child is properly provided for, and I will send the requisite money."

"We had arranged that her nurse should take her away to her own home in the country," said Madame Lavaux.

"That will do," he answered; and was about to leave the room, when the nurse, an honest countrywoman, interposed once more, to inquire where she should write to Monsieur to give him tidings of his little daughter.

"I want none," he replied. "You can apply here to Madame for money if the child lives; if it dies she will let me know, and I need send no more." And so saying, he strode out of the room, leaving the woman with hands and eyes uplifted at the hard-hearted conduct of the father.

For nearly two years M. Linders was absent from Paris, wandering about, as his habit was, from one town to another, a free man, as he would himself have expressed it, except for the one tie which he acknowledged only in the sums of money he sent from time to time, with sufficient liberality, to Madame Lavaux. No news reached him of his child, and he demanded none. But about twenty months after his wife's death, business obliged him to go for a few weeks to Paris; and finding himself with a leisure day on his hands, it occurred to him, with a sudden impulse, to spend it in the country and go and see his little girl. He ascertained from Madame Lavaux where she was, and went.

The woman with whom little Madeleine had been placed lived about fifteen miles from Paris, in a small village perched half-way up a steep hill, from the foot of which stretched a wide plain, where the Seine wound slowly among trees and meadows, and scattered villages. The house to which M. Linders was directed stood a little apart from the others, near the road-side, but separated from it by a strip of garden, planted with herbs and a patch of vines; and as he opened the gate, he came at once upon a pretty little picture of a child of two years, in a quaint, short-waisted, long-skirted pinafore, toddling about, playing at hide-and-seek among the tall poles and trailing tendrils, and kept within safe limits by a pair of leading-strings passed round the arm of a woman who sat in the shade of the doorway knitting. As M. Linders came up the narrow pathway she ran towards him to the utmost extent of her tether, uttering little joyous inarticulate cries, and bubbling over with the happy instinctive laughter of a child whose consciousness is bounded by its glad surroundings.

When, in moments of pseudo remorse, which would come upon him from time to time, it occurred to M. Linders to reflect upon his misdeeds, and adopt an apologetic tone concerning them, he was wont to propound a singular the-

ory respecting his life, averring, in general terms, that it had been spoilt by women,—a speech more epigrammatic, perhaps, than accurate, since of the two women who had loved him best, his mother and his wife, he had broken the heart of the one, and ruined the happiness of the other. And yet it was not without its grain of meaning, however false and distorted; for M. Linders, who was not more consistent than the rest of mankind, had, by some queer anomaly, along with all his hardness, and, recklessness, and selfishness, a capacity for affection after his own fashion, and an odd sensitiveness to the praise and blame of those women whom he cared for and respected which did not originate merely in vanity and love of applause. He had been fond of his mother, though he had ignored her wishes and abused her generosity; and he had hated his sister Thérèse, because he imagined that she had come between them. Their reproaches had been unbearable to him, and though his wife had never blamed him in words, there had been a mute upbraiding in her mournful looks and dejected spirits, which he had resented as a wrong done to the love he had once felt for her. In the absence of many subjects for self-congratulation, he rather piqued himself on a warm heart and sensitive feelings, and chose to consider them ill-requited by the cold words and sad glances of those whose happiness he was destroying. The idea that he should set matters straight by adjusting his life to meet their preconceived notions of right and wrong, would have appeared to him highly absurd; but he considered them unreasonable and himself ill-used when they refused to give their approbation to his proceedings, and this idea of ill-usage and unreasonableness he was willing to encourage, as it enabled him to shift the responsibility of their unhappiness from his own shoulders on to theirs, and to deaden the sense of remorse which would make itself felt from time to time. For in the worst of men, they say, there still lingers some touch of kindly human feeling, and M. Linders, though among the most worthless, was not perhaps absolutely the worst of men. He was selfish enough to inflict any amount of pain, yet not hardened enough to look unmoved on his victims. He had, in truth, taken both their misery and their reproaches to

heart; and sometimes, especially since his wife's death, he had surprised in himself a strange, unaccountable desire for a love that should be true and pure, but which, ignorant of, or ignoring his errors, should be content to care for him and believe in him just as he was: such a love as his wife might, perhaps, have given him in her single month of unconscious happiness. It was a longing fitful, and not defined in words, but a real sentiment all the same, not a sentimentality; and, imperfect as it was in scope and tendency, it expressed the best part of the man's nature. He despised it, and crushed it down; but it lay latent, and ready to be kindled by a touch.

And here was a small piece of womankind belonging to him, who could upbraid by neither word nor look, who ran towards him confidently, stretching out tiny hands to clutch at his shining gold chain, and gazing up in his face with great brown eyes, that recalled to him those of her dead mother, when she had first known and learnt to love him. Had Madelon been a shy, plain child—had she hidden her face, and run from him screaming to her nurse, as children are so wont to do, he would then and there have paid the money he had brought with him as the ostensible cause of his visit, and gone on his way, thinking no more about her for another two years perhaps. But Madelon had no thought of shyness with the tall. fair, handsome man who had taken her fancy: she stood for a moment in the pathway before him, balancing herself on tiptoe with uplifted arms, confident in the hope of being taken up; and, as the woman, recognizing M. Linders, came forward and bade the child run to papa, with a sudden unaccustomed emotion of tenderness, almost pathetic in such a man, he stooped down and raised her in his arms.

As he travelled back to Paris that day, M. Linders formed a plan which he lost no time in carrying, partially, at least, into execution. During the next twelvemonth he spent much of his time in Paris, and went frequently to see his small daughter, never without some gift to win her heart, till the child came to regard his pocket as the inexhaustible source of boundless surprises, in the shape of toys and cakes and bonbons. It was not long before she was

devoted to her father, and, her nurse dying when she was little more than three years old, M. Linders resolved at once to carry out his idea, and, instead of placing her with any one else, take possession of her himself. He removed her accordingly from the country to Paris, engaged a *bonne*, and henceforth Madelon accompanied him wherever he went.

CHAPTER V.

Monsieur Linders' System.

My little lady had given Horace Graham a tolerably correct impression of her life as they had talked together in the moonlight at Chaudfontaine. When M. Linders took her home with him—if that may be called home which consisted of wanderings from one hotel to another—it was with certain fixed ideas concerning her, which he began by realizing with the success that not unfrequently attended his ideas when he set himself with a will to work them out. His child's love and trust he had already gained, as she had won suddenly for herself a place in his heart, and he started with the determination that these relations between them should never be disturbed. She should be educated for himself; she should be brought up to see with his eyes, to adopt his views; she should be taught no troublesome standard of right and wrong by which to measure him and find wanting; no cold shadow of doubt and reproach should ever rise between them and force them asunder; and above all, he would make her happy—she for one should never turn on him and say, "See, my life is ruined, and it is you who have done it!" She should know no life, no aims, no wishes but his; but that life should be so free from care and sorrow that for once he would be able to congratulate himself on having made the happiness, instead of the misery, of some one whom he loved and who loved him.

These were the ideas that M. Linders entertained concerning Madelon, expressing them to himself in thoughts and language half genuine, half sentimental, as was his nature. But his love for his child was genuine enough; and for the fulfilment of his purpose he was willing to sacrifice much, devoting himself to her, and giving up time, comfort,

and even money, for the sake of this one small being whom in all the world he loved, and who was to be taught to love him. He took her about with him; she associated with his companions; he familiarized her with all his proceedings, and she came in consequence to look upon their mode of life as being as much a matter of course, and a part of the great system of things, as the child does who sees her father go out to plough every day, or mount the pulpit every Sunday to preach his sermon. Of course she did not understand it all; it was his one object in life that she should not; and fondly as he loved his little Madelon, he did not scruple to make her welfare subordinate to his own views. He was careful to keep her within the shady bounds of that world of no doubtful character, which he found wherever he went, hovering on the borders of the world of avowed honesty and respectability, jealously guarding her from every counter-influence, however good or beneficial. He would not send her to school, was half unwilling, indeed, that she should be educated in any way, lest she should come to the knowledge of good and evil, which he so carefully hid from her; and he even dismissed her good, kind-hearted *bonne* on overhearing her instruct the child, who could then hardly speak plain, in some little hymn or prayer, or pious story, such as nurses delight in teaching their charges. After that he took care of her himself with the assistance of friendly landladies at the hotels he frequented, who all took an interest in and were kind to the little motherless girl, but were too busy to have any time to spend in teaching her, or enlarging her ideas; and indeed all the world conspired to carry out M. Linders' plan; for who would have cared, even had it been possible, to undertake the ungracious task of opening the eyes of a child to the real character of a father whom she loved and believed in so implicitly? And she was so happy, too! Setting aside any possible injury he might be doing her, M. Linders was the most devoted of fathers, loving and caring for her most tenderly, and thinking himself well repaid by the clinging grasp of her small hand, by the spring of joy with which she welcomed him after any absence, by her gleeful voice and laughter, her perfect trust and confidence in him.

There must have been something good and true about this man, roué and gambler though he was, that, somehow, he himself and those around him had missed hitherto, but that sprang willingly into life when appealed to by the innocent faith, the undoubting love of his little child. Thus much Madelon all unconsciously accomplished, but more than this she could not do. M. Linders did not become a reformed character for her sake: he had never had any particular principles, and Madelon's loving innocence which aroused all his best emotions, had no power to stir in him any noble motives or high aspirations, which, if they existed at all, were buried too deep to be awakened by the touch of her small hand. His misdeeds had never occasioned him much uneasiness, except as they had affected the conduct of others towards himself; and he had no reproaches, expressed or implied, to fear from Madelon. "No one had ever so believed in him before!" he would sigh, with a feeling not without a certain pathos in its way, though with the ring of false sentiment characteristic of the man, and with an apparent want of perception that it was ignorance rather than belief that was in question. Madelon believed indeed in his love, for it answered readily to her daily and hourly appeals, but she cannot be said to have believed in his honor and integrity, for she can hardly have known what they meant, and she made no claims upon *them*. It was, perhaps, happy for her that the day when she should have occasion to do so never arrived.

She was not left quite uneducated, however; her father taught her after his own fashion, and she gained a good deal of practical knowledge in their many wanderings. When she was six years old she could talk almost as many languages, could dance, and could sing a variety of songs with the sweetest, truest little voice; and by the time she was eight or nine, she had learned both to write and read, though M. Linders took care that her range of literature should be limited, and chiefly confined to books of fairy-tales, in which no examples drawn from real life could be found, to correct and confuse the single-sided views she received from him. This was almost the extent of her learning, but she picked up all sorts of odd bits of infor-

tion, in the queer mixed society which M. Linders seemed everywhere to gather round him, and which appeared to consist of waifs and strays from every grade of society—from reckless young English milords, Russian princes, and Polish counts, *soi-disant*, down to German students and penniless artists.

It was, no doubt, fortunate, even at this early age, that Madelon's little pale face, with its wide-open brown eyes, had none of the prettiness belonging to the rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed, golden-haired type of beauty, and that she thus escaped a world of flattery and nonsense. She was silent too in company, as a rule, keeping her chatter and laughter, for the most part, till she was alone with her father, and content sometimes to sit as quiet as a mouse for a whole evening, watching what was going on around her; she was too much accustomed to strangers ever to feel shy with them, but she cared little for them, unless, as in Horace Graham's case, they happened to take her fancy.

It must not be imagined, however, that M. Linders was quite without conscience as regarded his child; there were some people with whom he took care that she should not associate, some society into which he never took her. Many an evening did Madelon spend happily enough while her father was out, in the snug little parlors of the hotels, where Madame, the landlady, would be doing up her accounts perhaps, and Monsieur, the landlord, reposing after the exertions of the day; while Mademoiselle Madelon, seated at the table, would build card-houses, or play at dominoes, and eat galette and confitures to her heart's content. Here, too, she would get queer little glimpses into life—hearing very likely how Monsieur B. had made off without paying his bill, or how those trunks that Madame la Comtesse C. had left eighteen months ago, as a pledge of her return, had been opened at last, and been found to contain nothing but old clothes, fit for the rag market; how a few francs might be advantageously added on here and there in the bill for the rich English family at the *premier*; how the gentleman known as No. 5 was looked upon as a suspicious character; and how Pierre the waiter had been set to watch the door of No. 8, who had spent three month

in the house without paying a sou, and was daily suspected of attempting to abscond. All these, and a dozen similar stories, and half the gossip of the town, would come buzzing round Madelon's ears as she sat gravely balancing one card on the top of the other. She heard and comprehended them with such comprehension as was in her; and no doubt they modified in some degree her childish views of life, which in these early years was presented to her, poor child! under no very sublime or elevated aspect; but they had little interest for her, and she paid small heed to them. In truth, her passionate love for her father was, no doubt, at this time her great preservative and safe-guard, ennobling her, as every pure unselfish passion must ennoble, and by absorbing her thoughts and heart, acting as a charm against many an unworthy influence around her. The first sound of his footstep outside was enough to put both stories and gossip out of her head, and was the signal for her to spring from her chair, and rush into the passage to meet him; and a few minutes after they would be seated together in their room upstairs, she nestling on his knee [illegible] likely, with her arm tight round his neck, while he recounted the adventures of the evening. His purse would be brought out, and it was Madelon's special privilege and treat to pour out the contents on the table and count them over. If M. Linders had won, it was a little fête for both —calculations as to how it should be spent, where they should go the next day, what new toy, or frock, or trinket should be bought: if he had lost, there would be a moment of discouragement perhaps, and then Madelon would say:

"It does not signify, papa, does it?—you will win tomorrow, you know."

As for M. Linders, the thought of the little, eager innocent face that would greet his return home was the brighest and purest vision that lighted his dark and wayward life, and he appealed to his child's sympathy and encouragement in a way that had something touching in it, showing as it did the gentler side of a man who was always reckless, and could be hard and merciless enough sometimes; but he was never anything but tender with his little Madelon,

and one can fancy the two sitting together, as she counts over the little gold pieces shining in the candle-light. Once, not long after his marriage, he had appealed to his wife in the same way, when, after an unusual run of luck, he had returned in triumph with his winnings. She, poor girl, looked first at them and then at him, with a piteous little attempt at a smile; then suddenly burst into tears, and turned away. It was the first and the last time he tried to win her sympathy in these matters, and was, perhaps, the beginning of the sort of estrangement that grew up between them.

These were happy evenings, Madelon thought, but she found those happier still when her father was at home, generally with one or two men who would come in to play cards with him. They were always good-natured and kind to the little girl who sat so still and close to her father's side, watching the game with her quick, intelligent eyes; though some of them, foolish smooth-faced lads, perhaps, would go away cursing the fate that had ever led them across M. Linders' path, and carrying an undying hatred in their hearts for the handsome courteous man who had enticed them on to ruin. How M. Linders lured the poor birds into the snare, and by what means he plucked them when there, Madelon never knew; all that belonged to the darker side of his character, which she never fully understood, and on which, for her sake, we will not dwell.

Most of all, however, did Madelon enjoy being at the German watering-places, for then she went out with her father constantly. The fair-haired, brown-eyed little girl was almost as well-known in the Kursaals of Homburg and Wiesbaden as the famous gambler himself, as evening after evening they entered the great lighted salons together, and took their places among the motley crowd gathered round the long green tables. There she would remain contented for hours, sometimes sitting on his knee, sometimes herself staking a florin or two—"to change the luck," M. Linders would say laughingly,—sometimes wearied out, curled up fast asleep in a corner of one of the sofas. Then there were the theatres, to which her father often took her, and where, with delighted, wondering eyes, she made acquain-

tance with most of the best operas, and learned to sing half Bellini's and Weber's music in her clear little voice. More than once, too, she was taken behind the scenes, where she saw so much of the mysteries of stage-working and carpentering as would have destroyed the illusions of an older person; but it did not make much difference to her; the next time she found herself in the stalls or balcony she forgot all about what was going on behind, and was as much enchanted as ever with the fine results prepared for the public gaze.

On other nights there would be the balls, always a supreme enjoyment. It must be owned that Madelon took great pleasure in seeing her small person arrayed in a smart frock; and she was never weary of admiring the big rooms with their gilded furniture, and mirrors, and brilliant lights, and polished floors, where a crowd of gay people would be twirling about to the sound of the music. She danced like a little fairy, too, with pure delight in the mere motion, was never tired, and rarely sat down; for Mademoiselle, who generally held herself rather aloof from strangers, would be pleased on these occasions to put on a little winning graciousness, giving her hand with the air of a small princess to any one soliciting the honor of a dance; and she was seldom without some tall partner, attracted by her *gentillesse* and naïve prattle—a mustached Austrian or Prussian officer, perhaps, in white or blue uniform, or one of her counts or barons, with a bit of ribbon dangling from his button-hole; or, if all else failed, there was always her father, who was ever ready to indulge her in any of her fancies, and never resisted her coaxing pleading for one more dance.

These were the evenings; for the days there were pleasures enough too, though of a simpler kind, and more profitable, perhaps, for our poor little Madelon, in her gay unconscious dance through that mad Vanity Fair, innocent though it was for her as yet.

Except on some special emergency, M. Linders rarely went to the gambling tables during the day. He had a theory that daylight was prejudicial to his prosperity, and that it was only at night that he could play there with any fair chance of success; but he not unfrequently had other

business of a similar nature on hand to occupy his mornings and afternoons; and when he was engaged or absent, Madelon, with the happy adaptability of a solitary child, had no difficulty in amusing herself alone with her toys, and picture-books, and dolls. At other times, when her father was at leisure, there would be walks with him, long afternoons spent in the gay Kursaal gardens, listening to the bands of music; and on idle days, which with M. Linders were neither few nor far between, excursions perhaps into the country, sometimes the two alone, but more frequently accompanied by one or two of M. Linders' companions. There they would dine at some rustic Gasthof, and afterwards, while her father and his friends smoked, drank their Rhine wine, and brought out the inevitable cards and dice in the shady, vine-trellised garden, Madelon, wandering about here and there, in and out, through yard and court, and garden and kitchen, poking her small nose everywhere, gained much primary information on many subjects, from the growing of cabbages to the making of sauerkraut—from the laying of eggs by ever-hopeful hens, to their final fulfilment of a ruthless destiny in a frying-pan. In return, she was not unwilling to impart to the good Hausfrau, and her troop of little ones and retainers, many details concerning her town life; and might sometimes be found, perched on the kitchen table, relating long histories to an admiring audience, in which the blue silk frocks and tall partners made no small figure, one may be sure.

It was a golden childhood. Even in after years, when, reading the history of these early days in a new light, she suffered a pang for almost every pleasure she had then enjoyed, even then Madelon maintained that her childhood had been one of unclouded happiness, such as few children know. The sudden changes of fortune, from splendor to poverty of the shabbiest description, the reckless, dishonest expenditure, and the endless debts consequent on it; the means—doubtful, to say the least of them—employed by M. Linders for procuring money; the sense of alienation from all that is best, and noblest, and truest in life—all these, which had gone far to make up the sum of her mother's misery, affected our Madelon hardly at all. Some of them she

did not know of; the rest she took as a matter of course. In truth, it mattered little to her whether they lived in a big hotel or a little one; whether the debts were paid or unpaid; whether money were forthcoming or not; she never felt the want of it, we may be sure. If she did not have some promised fête or amusement on one day, it was certain to come on another; and even the one or two occasions on which M. Linders, absolutely unable to leave a hotel until he had paid part of what he owed there, had been obliged to confiscate everything, caused her no uneasiness. The next week, very likely, she had other trinkets and knick-knacks, newer and prettier; and indeed, so long as she had her father, she cared for little else. In any small childish misfortune or ailment she had but to run to him to find help, and sympathy, and caresses; and she had no grief or care in these first years for which these were not a sufficient remedy.

Amidst all the miserable failures, and more unworthy successes of a wasted life, M. Linders gained at least one legitimate triumph, when he won his child's undying love and gratitude. All her life long, one may fancy, would Madelon cherish the remembrance of his unceasing tenderness, of his unwearying love for his little girl, which showed itself in a thousand different ways, and which, with one warm, loving little heart, at any rate, would ever go far to cover a multitude of sins. The only drawback to her perfect content in these early days was the presence of her uncle Charles, whom she could not bear, and who, for his part, looked upon her as a mere encumbrance, and her being with them at all as a piece of fatuity on the part of his brother-in-law. There were constant skirmishes between them while they were together; but even these ceased after a time, for Moore, who, ever since his sister's marriage, had clung fitfully to M. Linders, as a luckier and more prosperous man than himself, was accustomed to be absent on his own account for months together, and during one of these solitary journeys he died, about two years after Horace Graham had seen him at Chaudfontaine. Henceforth Madelon and her father were alone.

Madelon, then, by the time she was eight years old, had learnt to sing, dance, speak several languages, to write, to

play *rouge-et-noir*, and *roulette*, and indeed *piquet* and *écarté*, too, to great perfection, and to read books of fairy tales. At ten years old, her education was still at the same point; and it must be owned that, however varied and sufficient for the purposes of the moment, it left open a wide field for labor in future years; though M. Linders appeared perfectly satisfied with the results of his teaching so far, and showed no particular desire to enlarge her ideas upon any point. As for religion, no wild Arab of our London streets ever knew or heard less about it than did our little Madelon; or was left more utterly uninstructed in its simplest truths and dogmas. What M. Linders' religious beliefs were, or whether he had any at all, we need not inquire. He at least took care that none should be instilled into his child's mind; feeling, probably, that under whatever form they were presented to her, they would assuredly clash sooner or later with his peculiar system of education. For himself, his opinions on such matters were expressed when occasion arose, only in certain unvarying and vehement declamations against priests and nuns—the latter particularly, where his general sense of aversion to a class in the abstract, became specific and definite, when he looked upon that class as represented in the person of his sister Thérèse.

Of the outward forms and ceremonies of religion, Madelon could not, indeed, remain entirely ignorant, living constantly, as she did, in Roman Catholic countries; but her very familiarity with these from her babyhood robbed them in great measure of the interest they might otherwise have excited in her mind, and their significance she was never taught to understand. As a rule, a child must have its attention drawn in some particular way to its every-day surroundings, or they must strike it in some new and unfamiliar light, before they arouse more than a passing curiosity; and though Madelon would sometimes question her father as to the meaning and intention of this or that procession passing along the streets, he found no difficulty in putting her off with vague answers. It was a wedding or a funeral, he would say, or connected with some other ordinary event, which Madelon knew to be of daily recurrence; though none such had as yet had part in the economy of her small

world; and priests, and nuns, and monks became classed, without difficulty, in her mind, with doctors and soldiers, and the mass of people generally, who made money in a different way from her father, with whom, therefore, she seldom came into personal contact, and with whom she had little to do—money-making being still her one idea of the aim and business of life.

The first time, however, that she ever entered a church, when she was little more than nine years old, was an experience in her life, and this was the occasion of it. It was in a French provincial town, where M. Linders had stopped for a day on business—only for one day, but that Madelon was to spend for the most part alone; for her father, occupied with his affairs, was obliged to go out very early, and leave her to her own devices; and very dull she found them, after the first hour or two. She was a child of many resources, it is true, but these will come to an end when a little girl of nine years old, with books and dolls all packed up, has to amuse herself for ever so many hours in a dull country hotel, a hotel, too, which was quite strange to her, and where she could not, therefore, fall back upon the society and conversation of a friendly landlady. Madelon wandered upstairs and downstairs, looked out of all the windows she could get at, and at last stood leaning against the hall-door, which opened on to the front court-yard. It was very quiet and very dull, nothing moving anywhere; no one crossed the square, sunny space, paved with little stones, and adorned with the usual round-topped trees, in green boxes. Inside the house there was an occasional clatter of plates and dishes, or the resonant nasal cry of "Auguste," or "Henri," from one or other of the servants, but that was all. Madelon found it too tiresome; the *porte-cochère* stood half open, she crossed the court-yard and peeped out. She saw a quiet, sunny street, with not much more life or movement than there was within, but still a little better. Over the high walls surrounding the houses opposite, green trees were waving; at one end of the street there was the gleam of a river, a bridge, and a row of poplars; the other end she could not see, for the street made a bend, and a fountain with dribbling water filled up the angle. Presently a little

boy in a blue blouse, and a little girl with a tight round white cap, came up to the stone basin, each with a pitcher to fill; they were a long time about it, for what could be pleasanter, on this hot summer morning, than to stand dabbling one's fingers in the cool water? Madelon watched them till she became possessed with an irresistible desire to do the same. It was only a few steps off, and though she was strictly forbidden by her father ever to go out alone, still—she had so seldom an opportunity of being naughty, that her present consciousness of disobedience rather added, perhaps to the zest of the adventure. She would go just for this once—and in another moment she was out in the street. The little boy and girl fled with full pitchers as she came up to the fountain, suddenly awakened to a sense of the waste of time in which they had been indulging; but that made no difference to Madelon; she stood gazing with mute admiration at the open-mouthed monsters, from whose wide jaws the water trickled into the basin below; and then she held her hands to catch the drops till they were quite cold, and thought it the best play she had ever known. By-and-by, however, she began to look about her in search of further excitement, and, emboldened by success, turned the corner of the street, and ventured out of sight of the hotel. On one side large *porte-cochères* at intervals, shutting in the white, green-shuttered houses, that appeared beyond; on the other a long, high, blank wall, with nothing to be seen above it, and one small arched doorway about half-way down. This was the shady side; and Madelon, crossing over to it, arrived at the arched door, and stood for a moment contemplating it, wondering what could be inside.

She was not left long in doubt, for two priests crossed the road, and pushed open the door, without seeing the child, who, urged by a spirit of curiosity, crept unnoticed after them, and suddenly found herself in a cloister, running round a quadrangle, on one side of which rose the walls and spires and buttresses of a great church; in the centre a carefully kept space of smooth grass. Madelon stood for a moment motionless with delight; it reminded her of a scene in some opera or play to which she had been in Paris with her father, but, oh! how much more beautiful, and all real!

The sunlight streamed through the tracery of the cloisters, and fell chequered with sharp shadows on the pavement; the bright blue sky was crossed with pinnacles and spires, and there was an echo of music from the church which lured her on. The two priests walked quickly along, she followed, and all three entered the building by a side door together.

A vast, dim church, with long aisles and lofty pillars, which seemed to Madeleine's unpractised eye, fresh from the outer glare, to vanish in infinite mysterious gloom; a blaze of light, at the far-off high altar, with its priests, and incense, and gorgeous garments and tall candles; on every side shrines and tapers, and pictures, awful, agonized, compassionate Saviours, sad, tender Madonnas; a great silent multitude of kneeling people, and, above all, the organ peeling out, wave after wave of sound, which seemed to strike her, surround her, thrill her with a sense of—what? What was it all?—what did it all mean? An awful instinct suddenly awoke in the child's heart, painfully struggling with inarticulate cries, as it were, to make itself understood, even to herself. Wholly inarticulate, for she had been taught no words that could express, however feebly, these vague yearnings, these unutterable longings, suddenly stirring in her heart. This wonderful, solemn music, this place, so strange, so separate from any other she had known, what was it?—what did it all mean? Ah, yes, what did it all mean? A little girl, no older than herself, who knelt close by the door, with careless eyes that roamed everywhere, and stared wondering at Madelon's cotton frock and rough uncovered little head, could have explained it all very well; she had a fine gilt prayer-book in her hand, and knew most of her Catechism, and could have related the history of all the saints in the church; she did not find it at all impressive, though she liked coming well enough on these grand fête-days, when every one wore their best clothes, and she could put on her very newest frock. But our little stray Madelon, who knew of none of all these things, could find nothing better to do at last than to creep into a dark corner, between a side chapel and a confessional, crouch down, and begin to sob with all her heart.

Presently the music ceased, and the people went pouring out of the great doors of the church. Madelon, roused by the movement around her, looked up, dried her eyes, and came out of her corner; then, following the stream, found herself once more outside, not in the cloister by the door of which she had entered, but at the top of a wide flight of steps, leading down to a large sunny Place, surrounded with houses, where a fair was going on. She was fairly bewildered; she had never been in the town before, and though, in fact, not very far from the hotel where she was staying, she felt completely lost.

As she stood still for a moment, in the midst of the dispersing crowd, looking scared and dazed enough very likely, she once more attracted the attention of the little girl who had been kneeling near her in the church, and who now pointed her out to her parents, good, substantial-looking *bourgeois*.

"*Comme elle a l'air drôle,*" said the child, "with her hair all rough, and that old cotton frock."

"She looks as if she had lost some one," says the kindly mother. "I will ask her."

"No, she had not lost any one," Madelon said, in answer to her inquiries, "but she did not know where she was; could Madame tell her the way to the Hôtel de l'Aigle d'Or?"

"It is quite near," Madame answered; "we are going that way; if you like to come with us, we will show it to you."

So Madelon followed the three down the broad steps, and out into the Place, where she looked a queer little figure enough, perhaps, in the midst of all the gay holiday-folk who were gathered round the booths and stalls. She did not concern herself about that, however, for her mind was still full of what she had seen and heard in the church; and she walked on silently, till presently Madame, with some natural curiosity as to this small waif and stray she had picked up, said, "Are you staying at the hotel, *ma petite?*"

"Yes," answered Madelon, "we came there last night."

"And how was it you went to church all alone?"

"Papa had to go out," says Madelon, getting rather red

and confused, "and I was so dull by myself, and I—I went out into the street, and got into the church by a little door at the side—not that other one we came out at just now; so I did not know where I was, nor the way back again."

"Then you are a stranger here, and have never been to the church before?" said Monsieur.

"No," said Madelon; and then, full of her own ideas, she asked abruptly—"what was every one doing in there?"

"In there—in the church, do you mean?"

"Yes, in the church—what was every one doing?"

"But do you not know, then," said the mother, "that it is to-day a great fête—the fête of the Assumption?"

"No," said Madelon, "I did not know. Was that why so many people were there? What were they doing?" she persisted.

"How do you mean?—do you not go to the *messe* every Sunday?" said Madame, surprised.

"To the *messe?*" answered Madelon—"what is that? I never was in a church before."

"Never in a church before!" echoed a chorus of three astonished voices, while Monsieur added—"Never in this church, you mean."

"No," answered Madelon, "it is the first time I ever went into a church at all."

"But, *mon enfant*," said the mother, "you are big enough to have gone to church long before this. Why, you must be eight or nine years old, and Nanette here went to the *grand messe* before she was five—did you not, Nanette?"

"Yes," says Nanette; with a further sense of superiority added to that already induced by the contrast of her new white muslin frock with Madelon's somewhat limp exterior.

"And never missed it for a single Sunday or fête-day since," continued Madame, "except last year, when she had the measles."

"Do you go there every Sunday?" asked Madelon of the child.

"Yes, every Sunday and fête-days. Would you like to see my new Paroissien? My god-father gave it to me on my last birthday."

"And is it always like to-day, with all the singing, and music, and people?"

"Yes, always the same, only not always quite so grand, you know, because to-day is a great fête. Why don't you go to church always?"

"She is perhaps a little Protestant," suggested the father, "and goes to the Temple. Is that not it, my child?"

"I do not know," said Madelon, bewildered; "I never went to any Temple, and I never heard of Protestants. Papa never took me to church; but then we do not live, here you know."

"But in other churches it is the same—everywhere," cries Madame.

"What, in all the big churches in Paris, and everywhere?" said Madelon. "I did not know; I never went into them, but I will ask papa to take me there now." Then, recurring to her first difficulty, she repeated, "But what do people go there for?"

"*Mais—pour prier le bon Dieu!*" said the good man.

"I do not understand," said Madelon, despairingly. "What does that mean? What were the music and the lights for, and what were all the pictures about?"

"But is it, then, possible, *ma petite*, that you have had no one to teach you all these things? And on Sundays, what do you do then?" said the mother, while Nanette stared more and more at Madelon, with round eyes.

"We generally go into the country on Sundays," said Madelon. "Papa never goes to church, I am sure, or he would have taken me. I will ask him to let me go again—I like it very much." It was at this moment that they turned into the street in which stood the hotel. "Ah! there is papa," cried Madelon, rushing forward as she saw him coming towards them, and springing into his arms. He had returned to the hotel for a late *déjeûner*, and was in terrible dismay when Madelon, being sought for, was nowhere to be found. One of the waiters said he had seen her run out of the court-yard, and M. Linders was just going out to look for her.

"*Mon Dieu!* Madelon," he cried, "where, then, have you been?"

"I ran out, papa," said Madelon, abashed. "I am very sorry—I will not do it again. I lost myself, but Monsieur and Madame here showed me the way back."

Her friendly guides stood watching the two for a moment, as, after a thousand thanks and acknowledgments, they entered the hotel together.

"It is singular," said Madame; "he is handsome, and looks like a gentleman. How can any one bring up a little child like that in such ignorance? She can have no mother, *pauvre petite!*"

"What an odd little girl, Maman," cried Nanette, "never to have been to church before, and not to know why people go!"

"*Chut*, Nanette!" said her father. "Thou also wouldst have known nothing, unless some good friends had taught thee." And so these kindly people went their way.

Madelon, meanwhile, was relating all her adventures to her father. He was too rejoiced at having found her again to scold her for running away; but he was greatly put out, nevertheless as he listened to her little history. Here, then, was an emergency, such as he had dimly foreseen, and done much to avoid, which yet had come upon him unawares, without fault of his, and which he was quite unprepared to meet. He did not, indeed, fully understand its importance, nor all that was passing in his child's mind; but he did perceive that she had caught a glimpse through doors he had vainly tried to keep closed to her, and that that one glance had so aroused her curiosity and interest, that it would be less easy than usual to satisfy her.

"Why do you never go to church, papa?" she was asking. "Why do you not take me? It was so beautiful, and there were such numbers of people. Why do we not go?"

"I don't care about it myself," he answered, at last, "but you shall go again some day, *ma petite*, if you like it so much."

"May I?" said Madelon. "And will you take me, papa? What makes so many people go? Madame said they went every Sunday and fête-day."

"I suppose they like it," answered M. Linders. "Some

people go every day, and all day long—nuns, for instance, who have nothing else to do."

"It is, then, when people have nothing else to do that they go?" asked Madelon, misunderstanding him, with much simplicity.

"Something like it," answered M. Linders, rather grimly; then, with a momentary compunction, added, "Not precisely. They do it also, I suppose, because they think it right."

"And do you not think it right, papa? Why should they? I have seen people coming out of church before, but I never knew what it was like inside. I *may* go again some day?"

"When you are older, my child, I will take you again, perhaps."

"But that little girl Nanette, papa, was only five years old when she went first, her mother said, and I have never been at all," said Madelon, feeling rather aggrieved.

"Well, when we go to Florence next winter, Madelon, you shall visit all the churches. They are much more splendid than these, and have the most beautiful pictures, which I should like you to see."

"And will there be music, and lights, and flowers there, the same as here, papa?"

"Oh! for that, it is much the same everywhere," replied M. Linders. "People are much alike all the world over, as you will find, Madelon. Priests, and mummery, and a gaping crowd, to stare and say, 'How wonderful! how beautiful!' as you do now, *ma petite;* but you shall know better some day."

He spoke with a certain bitterness that Madelon did not understand, any more than she did his little speech; but it silenced her for a moment, and then she said more timidly.

"But, papa—"

"Well, Madelon!"

"But, papa, he said—*ce Monsieur*—he said that people go to church *pour prier le bon Dieu.* What did he mean? We often say '*Mon Dieu,*' and I have heard them talk of *le bon Dieu;* is that the same? Who is He then—*le bon Dieu?*"

M. Linders did not at once reply. Madelon was looking up into his face with wide-open perplexed eyes, frowning a little with an unusual effort of thought, with the endeavor to penetrate a momentous mystery, which she instinctively felt lay somewhere, and which she looked to him to explain; and he *could* not give her a careless, mocking answer; he sat staring blankly at her for a few seconds, and then said slowly:

"I cannot tell you."

"Do you not know, papa?"

"Yes, yes, certainly I know," he answered hastily, and with some annoyance; "but—in short, Madelon, you are too young to trouble your head about these things; you cannot understand them possibly; when you are older you shall have them explained to you."

"When, papa?"

"Oh, I don't know—one of these days, when you are a great girl, grown up."

"And you can't tell me now?" said Madelon, a little wistfully; "but you will let me go to the church again before that? Oh, indeed it was beautiful, with the lights, and the singing, and the music. Do you know, papa, it made me cry," she added, in a half whisper.

"*Vraiment!*" said M. Linders, with some contempt in his voice, and a slight, involuntary shrug of the shoulders.

The contempt was for a class of emotion with which he had no sympathy, and for that which he imagined had called it forth; not for his little Madelon, nor for her expression of it. But the child shrank back, blushing scarlet. He saw his mistake, perhaps, for he drew her towards him again, and with a tender caress and word tried to turn her thoughts in another direction; but it was too late; the impression had been made, and could never again be effaced. All unconsciously, with that one inadvertent word, M. Linders had raised the first slight barrier between himself and his child, had given the first shock to that confidence which he had fondly hoped was ever to exist undisturbed between them. In the most sacred hour her short life had yet known, Madeleine had appealed to him for help and sympathy, and she

had been repulsed without finding either. She did not indeed view it in that light, nor believe in and love him the less; she only thought she must have been foolish; but she took well to heart the lesson that she should henceforth keep such folly to herself—as far as he was concerned, at any rate.

As for M. Linders, this little conversation left him alarmed, perplexed, uneasy. What if, after all, this small being whom he had proposed to identify, as it were, with himself, by teaching her to see with his eyes, to apprehend with his understanding, what if she were beginning to develop an independent soul, to have thoughts, notions, ideas of her own, perhaps, to look out into life with eager eyes that would penetrate beyond the narrow horizon it had pleased him to fix as her range of vision, to ask questions whose answers might lead to awkward conclusions? For the moment it seemed to him that his whole system of education, which had worked so well hitherto, was beginning to totter, ready at any time, it might be, to fall into ruins, leaving him and his child vainly calling to each other across an ever-widening, impassable gulf. Already he foresaw as possible results all that he had most wished to avoid, and felt himself powerless to avert them; for, however ready to alienate her from good influences, and expose her to bad ones, he yet shrank from inculcating falsehood and wrong by precept. With a boy it would have been different, and he might have had little hesitation in bringing him up, by both precept and example, in the way he was to go; but with his little innocent woman-child—no, it was impossible. She must be left to the silent and negative teachings of surrounding influences, and in ignorance of all others; and what if these should fail? Perhaps he over-estimated the immediate danger, not taking sufficiently into account the strength and loyalty of her affection for him; but, on the other hand, he perhaps undervalued the depth and force of those feelings to the consciousness of which she had first been roused that day. "It shall not occur again, and, in time she will forget all about it," was his first conclusion. His second was perhaps wiser in his generation, taking into consideration a wider range of probabilities. "No," he

reflected, "there has been an error somewhere. I should have accustomed Madelon to all these things, and then she would have thought nothing of them. Well, that shall be remedied, for she shall go to every church in Florence, and so get used to them."

CHAPTER VI.

At Florence.

If we have dwelt with disproportionate detail on the above little incident we must be forgiven in consideration of its real importance to our Madeleine, marking, as it did, the commencement of a new era in her life. The sudden inspiration that had kindled for a moment in the great church died away, indeed, as newer impressions more imperatively claimed her attention; but the memory of it remained as a starting point to which any similar sensations subsequently recurring might be referred, as a phenomenon which seemed to contain within itself the germ and possible explanation of a thousand vague aspirations, yearnings which began about this time to spring up in her mind, and which almost unconsciously linked themselves with that solemn hour the remembrance of which, after her conversation with her father, she had set apart in her own heart, to be pondered on from time to time, but in silence,—a reticence too natural and legitimate not to be followed by a hundred others of a similar kind.

M. Linders, for reasons of his own, with which we need not concern ourselves here, spent the following autumn and winter in Florence, establishing himself in an apartment for the season, contrary to his usual practice of living in hotels; and this was how it happened that Madelon made two friends who introduced quite a new element into her life, one which, under other circumstances, might hardly have entered into it as a principle of education at all. The rooms M. Linders had taken were on the third floor of a large palazzo with many occupants, where a hundred feet daily passed up and down the common staircase, the number of steps they had to tread increasing for the most part in

direct proportion to their descent in the social grade which, with sufficiently imposing representatives on the first floor, reached its minimum, in point of wealth and station, in the fifth-story garret. On the same floor as Madelon and her father, but on the opposite side of the corridor, lived an American artist; and M. Linders had not been a week in the house before he recognized in him an ancient *confrère* of his old Parisian artist days, who, after many wanderings to and fro on the earth, had finally settled himself in Florence. The old intimacy was renewed without difficulty on either side. M. Linders was made free of the American's *atelier*, and he, for his part, willingly smoked his pipe of an evening in the Frenchman's little salon. He was a great black-bearded, yellow-faced fellow, with a certain careless joviality about him, that made him popular, though leading a not very respectable life; always extravagant, always in debt, and not averse to a little gambling and betting when they came in his way. He was a sufficiently congenial spirit for M. Linders to associate with freely; but he was kind-hearted, honorable after his own fashion, and had redeeming points in an honest enthusiasm, in a profound conviction of the grand possibilities of life in general, and of his art in particular. He was no great artist, and his business consisted mainly in making copies of well-known pictures, which he did with great skill, so that they always commanded a ready sale in the Florence market. But he also painted a variety of original subjects, and, in unambitious moments, occasionally surprised himself by producing some charming little picture which encouraged him to persevere in this branch of his art.

This man took a great fancy to Madelon, in the first instance from hearing how prettily and deftly she spoke English; and she, after holding herself aloof in dignified reserve for three days from this new acquaintance, was suddenly won over in a visit to his *atelier*, which henceforth became to her a sort of wonder-land, a treasure domain, where she might come and go as she pleased, and where, from beneath much accumulated dust, persevering fingers might extract unimagined prizes, in the shape of sketches, drawings, plaster casts, prints, and divers queer possessions

of different kinds. After this, she soon became fast friends with the American, who was very kind and good-natured to her, and M. Linders' promise that she should see all the churches in Florence was fulfilled by the artist. He took her to visit both them and the galleries, showed her the famous pictures, and told her the names of their painters; and the genuine reverence with which he gazed on them, his ever-fresh enjoyment and appreciation of them, impressed her, child as she was, far more than any mere expressions of admiration or technical explanation of their merits would have done.

Sometimes, if she accompanied him to any of the churches where he happened to be copying a picture, he would leave her to wander about alone, and they were strange weird hours that she spent in this way. She did not indeed again assist at any of the great church ceremonies, but the silent spaces of these chill, grand, solemn interiors impressed her scarcely less with a sense of mysterious awe. Tapers twinkled in dim side chapels, pictures and mosaics looked down on her from above, rare footsteps echoed along the marble pavements, silent figures knelt about here and there, pillars, marbles, statues gleamed, and heavy doors and curtains shut in the shadowy, echoing, silent place from the sunshine, and blue sky, and many colored life without. Madelon, wandering about in the gloom, gliding softly into every nook and corner, gazing at tombs and decorated altars and pictures, wondered more and more at this strange new world in which she found herself, and which she had no one to interpret to her. It had a mysterious attraction for her, as nothing had ever had before; and yet it was almost a relief at last to escape again into the warm, sunny out-of-door life, to walk home with the painter through the bright narrow streets, listening to his gay careless talk, and lingering, perhaps, at some stall, in the busy market-place, to buy grapes and figs; and then to take a walk with her father into the country, where roses nodded at her over garden walls, and vines were yellowing beneath the autumn sky. Her sensitive perception of beauty and grandeur was so much greater than her power of grasping and comprehending them, that her poor little

mind became oppressed and bewildered by the disproportion between the vividness with which she received new impressions, and her ability for seizing their meaning.

The pictures themselves, which, before long, she learnt to delight in, and even in some sort to appreciate, were a perpetual source of perplexity to her in the unknown subjects they represented. Her want of knowledge in such matters was so complete that her American friend, who, no doubt, took it for granted that she had been brought up in the religion of the country, never even guessed at it, not imagining that a child could remain so utterly uninstructed in the simple facts and histories; and, somehow, Madelon divined this, and began to have a shy reluctance in asking questions which would betray an unsuspected ignorance. "This is such or such a Madonna," the artist would say; "there you see St. Elizabeth, and that is St. John the Baptist, you know." Or he would point out St. Agnes, or St. Cecilia, or St. Catherine, as the case might be.

"Who was St. Catherine?" Madelon ventured to ask one day.

"Did you never hear of her?" he answered. "Well then, I will tell you all about her. There were, in fact, two St. Catherines, but this one here, who, you see, has a wheel, lived long before the other. There once dwelt in Alexandria a lovely and accomplished maiden—" And he would no doubt have related to her the whole of the beautiful old mystical legend; but her father, who happened to be with them that day, interrupted him.

"Don't stuff the child's head with that nonsense," he said, and, perhaps, afterwards gave his friend a hint; for Madelon heard no more about the saints, and was left to puzzle out meanings and stories for the pictures for herself —and queer enough ones she often made, very likely. On the other hand, the American, who liked to talk to her in his own tongue, and to make her chatter to him in return, would tell her many a story of the old master painters, of Cimabue and the boy Giotto, of Lionardo da Vinci, and half a dozen others; old, old tales of the days when, as we sometimes fancy, looking back through the mist of centuries, there were giants on the earth, but all new and fresh to our little Made-

lon, and with a touch of romance and poetry about them as told by the enthusiastic artist, which readily seized her imagination; indeed he himself, with his black velvet cap, and short pipe, and old coat, became somehow ennobled and idealized in her simple mind by his association through his art with the mighty men he was teaching her to reverence.

Madelon spent much of her time in the painter's *atelier*, for her father took it into his head this winter to try his hand once more at his long-neglected art, and, armed with brushes and palette, passed many of his leisure hours in his friend's society. We cannot accredit M. Linders with any profound penetration, or with any subtle perception of what was working in his little daughter's mind, but with the most far-reaching wisdom he could hardly have devised better means, at this crisis in her life, for maintaining his old hold upon her, and keeping up the sense of sympathy between them, which had in one instance been disturbed and endangered.

She was just beginning to be conscious of the existence of a new and glorious world, where money-making was, on the whole, in abeyance, and roulette-tables and croupiers had apparently no existence at all; and the sight of her father at his easel day after day at once connected him with it, as it were, since he also could produce pictures—*tout comme un autre.* Then M. Linders could talk well on most subjects, and in the discussions that the two men would not unfrequently hold concerning pictures, Madelon was too young, and had too strong a conviction of her father's perfect wisdom, to discern between his mere clever knowledge of art and the American's pure love and enthusiasm; or if, with some instinctive sense of the difference, she turned more readily to the latter for information, that was because it was his *métier;* whereas with papa—Oh! with papa it was only an amusement; his business was of quite another kind.

The American amused himself by painting Madelon more than once; and she made a famous little model, sitting still and patiently for hours to him and to her father, who had a knack of producing any number of little, affected, meretricious pictures, in the worst possible style and taste. Years afterwards, Madelon revisited the studio, where the black-bearded friendly American, grown a little bent and a little

gray, was still stepping backwards and forwards before the same easel standing in the old place; orange and pomegranate trees still bloomed in the windows; footsteps still passed up and down the long corridor outside where her light childish ones had so often echoed; the old properties hung about on the walls; and there, among dusty rolls piled up in a corner, Madelon came upon more than one portrait of herself, a pale-faced, curly-headed child, who looked out at her from the canvas with wistful brown eyes that seemed full of the thoughts that at that time had begun to agitate her poor little brain. How the sight of them brought back the old vanished days! How it stirred within her sudden tender recollections of the quiet hours when, dressed out in some quaint head-gear, or *contadina* costume, or merely in her own every-day frock, she had sat perched upon a high stool, or on a pile of boxes, dreaming to herself, or listening to the talk between the two men.

"That man is a fool!" the American would exclaim, dashing his brush across a whole morning's work; "that man is a presumptuous fool who, here in Florence, here where those others have lived and died, dares to stand before an easel and imagine that he can paint—and I have been that man!" He was wont to grow noisy and loquacious over his failures—not moody and dumb, as some men do.

"You concern yourself too much," M. Linders would reply calmly, putting the finishing touch to Madelon as a *bergère* standing in the midst of a flock of sheep, and a green landscape—like the enlarged top of a *bonbonnière*. "You are too ambitious, *mon cher*—you are little, and want to be great—hence your discomfort; while I, who am little, and know it, remain content."

"May I be spared such content!" growled the other, who was daily exasperated by the atrocities his friend produced by way of pictures. It was beyond his comprehension how any man could paint such to his disgrace, and then calmly contemplate them as the work of his own hands. "Heaven preserve me from such content, I say!"

"But it is there you are all in the wrong," says M. Linders, quite unmoved by his companion's uncomplimentary energy. "You agitate, you disturb yourself with the idea

that some day you will become something great—you begin to compare yourself with these men whose works you are forever copying, with who knows?—with Raffaelle, with Da Vinci—"

"I compare myself with them!" cries the American, interrupting him. "I! No, *mon ami*, I am not quite such a fool as that, I reverence them, I adore their memory, I bow down before their wonderful genius"—and, as he spoke, he lifted his cap from his head, suiting his action to his words—"but compare myself!—I!" Then picking up his brush again, he added: "But the world needs its little men as well as its great ones—at any rate, the little ones need their *pot au feu*; so to work again. *Allons, ma petite*, your a head little more this way."

This little conversation, which occurred nearly at the beginning of their acquaintance, the painter's words and manner, his energy, his simple, dignified gesture as he raised his cap—all made a great impression on our Madelon; it was indeed one of her first lessons in that hero-worship whereby lesser minds are brought into *rapport* with great ones; and, even while they reverence afar off, exultingly feel that they in some sort share in their genius through their power of appreciating it. Nor was it her last lesson of the same kind.

Her second friend was an old German violinist, who inhabited two little rooms at the top of the big house, a tall, broad-shouldered, stooping man, whose thick yellow hair and mustache, plentifully mixed with gray, blue eyes, and fair complexion, testified to his nationality, as did his queer uncouth accent, though he had spent at least two-thirds of his life in Florence. He was an old friend of the American painter's, and paid frequent visits to his studio; and it was there he first met Madelon and her father. He did not much affect M. Linders' company, but he took a fancy to the child, as indeed most people did, and made her promise that she would come and see him; and when she had once found her way, and been welcomed to his little bare room, where an old piano, a violin, and heaps of dusty folios of music, were the principal furniture, a day seldom passed without her paying him a visit. She would perch herself at his window, which commanded a wide view over the city,

with its countless roofs, and domes, and towers, and beyond the encircling hills, with their scattered villas, and slopes of terraced gardens, and pines, and olives, all under the soft blue transparent sky; and with her eyes fixed on this sunny view, Madelon would go off into some dreamy fit, as she listened to the violinist, of whose playing she never wearied. He was devoted to his art, though he had never attained to any remarkable proficiency in it; and at any hour of the day he might be heard scraping, and tuning, and practising, for he belonged to the orchestra of one of the theatres. It was quite a new sensation for Madelon to hear so much music in private life, and she thought it all beautiful—tuning and scraping and all.

"But that is all rubbish," the German would cry, after spending an hour in going through some trashy modern Italian music. "Now, my child, you shall hear something worth listening to;" and with a sigh of relief he would turn to some old piece by Mozart or Bach, some minuet of Haydn's, some romance of Beethoven's, which he would play with no great power of execution, indeed, but with a rare sweetness and delicacy of touch and expression, and with an intense absorption in the music, which communicated itself to even so small a listener as Madelon.

It would have been hard to say which of the two had the more enjoyment—she, as she sat motionless, her chin propped on her two hands, her brown eyes gazing into space, and a hundred dreamy fancies vaguely shaped by the music, flitting through her brain; or he, as he bent over his violin, lovingly exacting the sweet sounds, and his thoughts—who knows where?—anywhere, one may be sure, rather than in the low-ceiled, dusty garret, redolent of tobacco smoke, and not altogether free from a suspicion of onions.

"There, my child," he would say at the end, "that is music—that is art! What I was playing before was mere rubbish—trash, unworthy of me and of my violin."

"And why do you play it?" asks Madelon, simply.

"Ah! why, indeed!" said the violinist—"because one must live, my little Fräulein; and since they will play nothing else at the theatre, I must play it also, or I should be badly off."

"You are not rich, then?" said Madelon.

"Rich enough," he answered. "I gain enough to live upon, and I ask no more."

"Why don't you make money like papa?" says Madelon; "then you could play what you liked, you know. We are very rich sometimes."

The old German screwed up his queer, kind, ugly face.

"It—it's not my way," he said dryly. "As for money, I might have had plenty by this time, if I had not run away from home when I was a boy, because I preferred being a poor musician to a rich merchant. Money is not the only nor the best thing in the world, my little lady."

M. Linders apparently saw no danger to Madelon's principles in these new friendships, or else, perhaps, he was bent on carrying out his plan of letting her get used to things; at any rate, he did not interfere with her spending as much time as she liked with both painter and musician; and every day through the winter she grew fonder of the society of the old violinist He was a lonely man, who lived with his music and his books, cared little for company, and had few friends; but he liked to see Madelon flitting about his dusky room, carrying with her bright suggestions of the youth, and gayety, and hopefulness he had almost forgotten. He talked to her, taught her songs, played to her as much as she liked, and often gave her and her father orders for the theatre to which he belonged, where, with delight, she would recognize his familiar face as he nodded and smiled at her from the orchestra. He instructed her, too, in music; made her learn her notes, and practise on the jangling old piano, and even, at her particular request, to scrape a little on the violin; but she cared most for singing, and for hearing him play and talk. She never felt shy or timid with him, and one day, at the end of a long rhapsody about German music and German composers, she asked him innocently enough—

"Who was Beethoven, and Mozart, and—and all those others you talk about? I never heard of them before."

"Never before!" he cried, in a sort of comic amazement and dismay. "Here is a little girl who has lived half her life in Germany, who talks German, and yet never heard of

Beethoven, nor of Mozart, nor of—of all those others! Listen, then—they were some of the greatest men that ever lived."

And, indeed, Madelon heard enough about them after that; for delighted to have a small, patient listener, to whom he could rhapsodize as much as he pleased in his native tongue, the violinist henceforth lost no opportunity of delivering his little lectures, and would harangue for an hour together, not only about music and musicians, but about a thousand other things—a queer, high-flown, rambling jumble, often enough, which Madelon could not possibly follow nor understand, but to which she nevertheless liked to listen. A safer teacher she could hardly have had; she gained much positive information from him, and when he got altogether beyond her, she remained impressed with the conviction that he was speaking from the large experiences of deep, mysterious wisdom and knowledge, and sat listening with a reverential awe, as to some strange, lofty strain, coming to her from some higher and nobler region than she could hope to attain to as yet, and of which she could in some sort catch the spirit, though she could not enter into the idea. At the same time there was a certain childlike vein running through all the old man's rambling talk, which made it, after all, not unsuited to meet the instinctive aspirations of a child's mind. With him love and veneration for greatness and beauty, in every form, amounted almost to a passion, which was still fresh and genuine, as in the lad to whom the realization of the word *blasé* seems the one incomprehensible impossibility of life. In the simple reverence with which he spoke of the great masters of his art, Madelon might have recognized the same spirit as that which animated the American; and as the artist had once uncovered at the name of Raffaelle and Lionardo da Vinci, so did the musician figuratively bow down at the shrines of Handel, or Bach, or Beethoven. From both these men, so different in other respects, the child began to learn the same lesson, which in all her life before she had never even heard hinted at.

All this, however, almost overtaxed our little Madelon's faculties, and it was not surprising that, as the winter wore

on, a change gradually came over her. In truth, both intellect and imagination were being overstrained by the constant succession of new images, new ideas, new thoughts, that presented themselves to her. She by no means grew accustomed to churches—not in the sense, at any rate, which her father had hoped would be the result of his new system. It was not possible that she should, while so much remained that was mysterious and unexplained; she only wearied her small brain with the effort to find the explanation for all these new perplexities, which she felt must exist somewhere, though she could not find it; add to this, these long conversations, this music, with its strange, vague suggestions, and even the thousand novelties of the picturesque Italian life around her, not one of which was lost on her impressionable little mind, and we need not wonder that she began to suffer from an excitement that gathered in strength from day to day. She grew thin, morbid, nervous, ate almost nothing, and lost her usual vivacity, sitting absorbed in dreamy fits, from which it was difficult to arouse her, and which were very different from the quiet, happy silence in which she used to remain contented by her father's side for hours. All night she was haunted with what she had seen by day in picture-galleries and churches. The heavenly creations of Fra Angelico or Sandro Botticelli, of Ghirlandaio or Raffaelle, over which she had mused and pondered, reproduced themselves in dreams, with the intensity and reality of actual visions, and with accessories borrowed from all that, in her new life, had impressed itself most vividly on her imagination. Once more she would stand in the vast church, the censers swinging, the organ pealing overhead, round her a great throng of beatified adoring saints, with golden glories, with palms, and tall white lilies, and many-colored garments; or pillars and arches would melt away, and she would find herself wandering through flower-enamelled grass, in fair rose-gardens of Paradise; or radiant forms would come gliding towards her through dark-blue skies; or the heavens themselves would seem to open, and reveal a blaze of glory, where, round a blue-robed, star-crowned Madonna, choirs of rapturous angels repeated the divine melodies she had heard faintly echoed in the violinist's dim little room.

All day long these dreams clung to her, oppressing her with their strange unreal semblance of reality associating themselves with every glowing sunset, with every starry sky, till the pictures themselves that had suggested them looked pale by comparison.

She was, in fact, going through a mental crisis, such as, in other circumstances, and under fostering influences, has produced more than one small ecstatic enthusiast; the infant shining light of some Methodist conventicle; the saintly child visionary of some Catholic convent. But Madelon had no one to foster, nor to interpret for her these feverish visions, so inexplicable to herself, poor child! To the good-natured, careless, jovial American, she would not have even hinted at them for worlds, and not less carefully did she shun appealing to her father for sympathy. That contemptuous "*vraiment*" dwelt in her memory, not as a matter of resentment, but as something to be avoided henceforth at the cost of any amount of self-repression. She would sit leaning her languid little head on his shoulder; but when he anxiously asked her what ailed her, she could only reply, "I don't know, papa." And indeed she did not know; nor even if she had, could she have found the words with which to have explained it to him. It was, after all, the old German who won her confidence at last. There was, as we have said, something simple, genuine, homely about the old man; a reminiscence, perhaps, of his homely Fatherland still clinging about him, after more than forty years of voluntary exile, which Madelon could well appreciate, though she could not have defined it; for a child judges more by instinct than reflection, and it was through no long process of reasoning that she had arrived at the certainty that she would be met here by neither contempt nor indifference. Moreover, his generally lofty and slightly incomprehensible style of conversation, and the endless stores of learning with which she had innocently accredited him, had surrounded him with that vague halo of wisdom and goodness so dear to the hearts of children of larger as of smaller growth, and which they are so eager to recognize, that they do not always distinguish between the false and the true. From the very beginning of their ac-

quaintance, it had occurred to Madelon that she might be able to gain some information on that subject, which her father had pronounced to be above her comprehension as yet; but which, on reflection, and encouraged by a Nanette's example, she felt quite sure she could understand if it were only explained to her. Twenty times had that still unanswered question trembled on her lips, but a shy timidity, not so much of her old friend as of the subject itself, which had become invested in her mind with a kind of awful mystery, to which a hundred circumstances daily contributed, checked her at the moment of utterance.

One evening, however, she was sitting as usual at the window in the old man's room. The sun had set, the short twilight was drawing to a close, church bells were ringing, down in the city yellow lights were gleaming in windows here and there, above, the great sky rounded upward from a faint glow on the horizon through imperceptible gradations of tint, to pure depths of transparent blue overhead, where stars were beginning to flash and tremble; within, in the gloom, the musician sat playing a sacred melody of Spohr's, and as Madelon listened, some subtle affinity between this hour and the first one she had spent in the church touched her, and her eyes filled with sudden tears of painful ecstasy. As the old German ceased, she went up to him with an impulse that admitted of no hesitation, and, as well as she could, told him all that was in her mind —her dreams, her strange weird fancies, all that for the last few months had been haunting and oppressing her with its weight of mystery. "Papa said I could not understand," she said in conclusion, "but I think I could. Will you not explain it to me? Can you not tell me what it all means, and who—who is God?"

The German had heard in silence till then, but at this last question he started from his listening attitude.

"*Was—was—*" he stammered, and suddenly rising—"*Ach, mein Gott!*" he cried, with the familiar ejaculation, "to ask me!—to ask me!"

He walked twice up and down the room, as stirred by some hidden emotion, his head bowed, his hands behind his back, murmuring to himself, and then stopped where Made

lon was standing by the window. She looked up, half trembling, into the rugged face bent over her. He was her priest for the moment, standing as it were between earth and heaven—her confessor, to whom she had revealed the poor little secrets of her heart, and she waited with a sort of awe for his answer.

"My child," he said at length, looking down sadly enough into her eager, inquiring eyes, "when I was no older than thou art, I had a pious, gentle mother, at whose knee night and morning I said my prayers—and believed. If she were alive now, I would say, 'Go to her, and she will tell thee of all these things'—but do not speak of them to me. Old Karl Wendler is neither good, nor wise, nor believing enough to instruct thee, an innocent child."

He made this little speech very gently and solemnly; then turned away abruptly, took up his hat, and left the room without another word. Madelon stood still for a minute baffled, repulsed, with a sort of bruised, sore feeling at her heart, and yet with a new sense of wondering pity, roused by something in his words and manner; then she too left the room, and through the darkness crept softly downstairs.

So ended this little episode with the violinist. Not that she did not visit and sit with him as much as before; the very next day, when she returned, rather shyly, upstairs, she found him sitting in the old place, with the old nod and smile to welcome her, but somehow he managed to put things on a different footing—he spared her his long metaphysical discourses, and talked to her more as the child that she was, laughing, joking, and telling her queer hobgoblin and fairy stories, some of which she knew before indeed, but which he related with a quaint simplicity and naïveté, which gave them a fresh charm for her; and under this new aspect of things she brightened up, began to lose her fits of dreaminess, to chatter as in old times, and cheered many an hour of the musician's solitary life. The American artist, too, left Florence about this time for a visit to Rome; and during his absence the *atelier* was closed, and wanderings through churches and picture galleries were exchanged for long excursions into the country with her father; by degrees dreams,

fancies, visions floated away, and Madelon became herself again.

She had gone through a phase, and one not altogether natural to her, and which readily passed away with the abnormal conditions that had occasioned it. She was by no means one of those dreamy, thoughtful, often melancholy children who startle us by the precocious grasp of their intellect, by their intuitive perception of truths which we had deemed far above their comprehension. Madelon's precocity was of quite another order. In her quick, impulsive, energetic little mind there was much that was sensitive and excitable, little that was morbid or unhealthy. One might see that, with her, action would always willingly take the place of reflection; that her impulses would have the strength of inspirations; that she would be more ready to receive impressions than to reason upon them. Meditation, comparison, introspection, were wholly foreign to this little, eager, impetuous nature, however they might be forced upon it in the course of years and events; and with her keen sense of enjoyment in all glad outward influences, one might have feared that the realities of life present to her would too readily preclude any contemplation of its hidden possibilities, but for a lively, susceptible imagination, which would surely intervene to prevent any such tendency being carried out to its too prosaic end. It was through appeals to her imagination and affection, rather than to her reason and intellect, that Madeleine could be influenced; and whatever large sympathies with humanity she might acquire through life, whatever aspirations after a high and noble ideal, whatever gleams of inspiration from the great beyond that lies below the widest as well as the narrowest horizon, might visit her —all these would come to her, we may fancy, through the exercise of pure instincts and a sensitive imagination, rather than through the power of logical deduction from given causes.

From our small, ten-year-old Madelon, however, all this still lay hidden; for the present, the outward pressure, which had weighed too heavily on her little mind and brain, removed, she returned with a glad reaction to her old habits of thought and speech. Not entirely indeed; the education

she had received, remained and worked; the "obstinate questionings," an answer to which she had twice vainly sought, were unforgotten, and still awaited their reply. This little Madelon, to whom the golden gates had been opened, though ever so slightly—to whom the divine, lying all about her and within her, had been revealed, though ever so dimly—could never be quite the same as the little Madelon who, careless and unthinking, had strayed into the great church that summer morning six months ago; but the child herself was as yet hardly conscious of this, and neither, we may be sure, was M. Linders, as with renewed cheerfulness, and spirits, and chatter, she danced along by his side under the new budding trees, under the fair blue sky.

It was soon after this, when the delicious promise of an early spring was brightening the streets and gardens of Florence, filling them with sunshine and flowers, that another shadow fell upon the brightness of Madelon's life, and one so dark and real, as to make all others seem faint and illusory by comparison. Her father had a serious illness. He had not been well all winter; and one day, Madelon, coming down from the violinist's room, had been frightened almost out of her small wits at finding him lying back unconscious in a chair in their little salon. She called the old woman who acted as their servant to her assistance, and between them they had soon succeeded in restoring him to consciousness, when he had made light of it, saying it was merely a fit of giddiness, which would have passed off. He had refused to be alarmed, or to send for a doctor, even after a second and third attack of the same kind; but then a fever, which in the mild spring weather was lurking about, lying in wait for victims, seized him, and laid him fairly prostrate.

His illness never took a really dangerous turn, but it kept him weak and helpless for some weary weeks, during which Madelon learnt to be a most efficient little nurse, taking turns with the old servant and with the violinist, who willingly came down from his upper regions to do all he could to help his little favorite. In some respects she, perhaps, made the best nurse of all, with her small skilful fingers, and entire devotion to her father. She had a curious courage,

too, for such an inexperienced child, and the sense of an emergency was quite sufficient to make her conquer the horrible pang it gave her loving little heart to see her father lying racked with pain, unconscious, and sometimes delirious. She never failed to be ready when wanted; the doctor complimented her, and said jokingly that the little Signorina would make a capital doctor's assistant. Her German friend nodded approval, and, best of all, it was always to his Madelon that M. Linders turned in his most weary moments—from her that he liked to receive drinks and medicine; and she it was who, as he declared, arranged his pillows and coverings more comfortably than any one else. In delirium he asked for her continually; his eyes sought her when she was not in the room, and lighted up when she came with her little noiseless step to his bedside. The old German, who had had a strong dislike to, and prejudice against, this man, took almost a liking for him, as he noted the great love existing between him and his little daughter.

The American did not return till M. Linders was nearly well again, and thinking of departure. Madelon was in despair at the idea of leaving Florence; it had been more like home to her than any place she had yet known, and it almost broke her heart to think of parting with her old German friend; but M. Linders was impatient to be gone. He wanted change of air, he said, after his illness; but, indeed, had other reasons which he proclaimed less openly, but which were far more imperative, and made him anxious to pay an earlier visit to Germany this year than was usual with him. Certain speculations, on the success of which he he had counted, had failed, so that a grand *coup* at Homburg or Baden seemed no less necessary than desirable to set him straight again with the world, and he accordingly fixed on a day towards the end of April for their departure.

The American made a festive little supper the evening before in his *atelier*, but it was generally felt to be a melancholy failure, for not even the artist's rather forced gayety, nor M. Linders' real indifference, could enliven it. As for the old German, he sat there, saying little, eating less, and smoking a great deal; and Madelon at his side, was speech

less, only rousing herself later in the evening to coax him into playing once more all her favorite tunes. Every one, except perhaps M. Linders, felt more or less sorry at the breaking up of a pleasant little society which had lasted for some months, and the violinist almost felt as if he were being separated from his own child. Madelon wished him good-bye that night, but she ran upstairs very early the next morning to see him once more before starting.

The old man was greatly moved; he was standing looking sadly out of the window when she came in, and when he saw her in her little travelling cloak, the tears began to run down his rugged old cheeks.

"God bless thee, my little one!" he said. "I shall miss thee sorely—but thou wilt not forget me?"

"Never, never!" cried Madelon, with a little sob, and squeezing the kind hands that held hers so tightly.

"And if I should never see thee again," said the German in broken accents, "if—if—remember, I—" He hesitated and stammered, and M. Linders' voice was heard calling Madelon.

"I must go," she said, "papa is calling me; but I will never forget you—never; ah! you have been so good, so kind to me. See here," she said, unclosing one of her hands which she had kept tightly shut, and showing the little green and gold fish Horace Graham had given her years before, "I promised never to part with this, but I have nothing else—and—and I love you so much—will you have it?"

"No, no," said the old man, smiling and shaking his head, "keep thy promise, and thy treasure, my child; I do not require that to remind me of thee. Farewell!"

He put her gently out of the door as her father's step was heard coming upstairs, and closed it after her. She never did see him again, for he died in less than two years after their parting.

M. Linders went to Homburg, to Baden, to Wiesbaden, but he was no longer the man he had been before his illness; he won largely, indeed, at times, but he lost as largely at others, playing with a sort of reckless, feverish impatience, instead of with the steady coolness that had distinguished him formerly. Old acquaintance who met him said that

M. Linders was a broken man, and that his best days were over: men who had been accustomed to bet on his success shrugged their shoulders, and sought for some steadier and luckier player to back; he himself, impatient of ill-luck, and of continual defeat in the scenes of his former triumphs, grew restless and irritable, wandered from place to place in search of better fortune and better health, and at length, at the end of a fortnight's stay at Weisbaden, after winning a large sum at *rouge-et-noir*, and losing half of it the next day, announced abruptly that he was tired of Germany, and should set off at once for Paris. Madelon had noticed the alteration in her father less than any one else perhaps; she was used to changes of fortune, and whatever he might feel he never showed it in his manner to her; outwardly, at least, this summer had appeared to her very similar to any preceding one, and she was too much accustomed to M. Linders' sudden moves, to find anything unusual in this one, although dictated as it was by a caprice of weariness and disgust, it took them away from the German tables just at the height of the season. Once more, then, the two set out together, and towards the middle of August found themselves established in their old quarters in the Paris Hotel, where Madame Linders had died, and where Madame Lavaux still reigned head of the establishment.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

After five years.

ONE evening, about three weeks after their arrival in Paris, Madelon was standing at a window at the end of the long corridor into which M. Linders' apartment opened; the moon was shining brightly, and she had a book in her hand, which she was reading by its clear light, stopping, however, every minute to gaze down into the front court-yard of the hotel, which lay beneath the window, quiet, almost deserted after the bustle of the day, and full of white moonlight and black shadows. Her father was out, and she was watching for his return, though it was now long past eleven o'clock.

There was nothing unusual on her part in this late vigil, for she was quite accustomed to sit up for her father, when he spent his evenings away from home; but there must have been something strange and forlorn-looking in the little figure standing there all alone at such an hour, for a gentleman, who had come in late from the theatre, paused as he was turning the key of the door before entering his room, looked at her once or twice, and, after a moment's hesitation, walked up to the window. Madelon did not notice him till he was close behind her, and then turned round with a little start, dropping her book.

"I did not think it was you—" she began; then seeing a stranger, stopped short in the middle of her speech.

"I am afraid I have startled you," said the gentleman in

English-French, but with a pleasant voice and manner, "and disappointed you too."

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur," she answered, "I thought it was papa; I have been looking for him for so long," and she turned round to the window again.

It was five years since Horace Graham and Madelon had spent an hour together in the court-yard at Chaudfontaine, so that it was not surprising that they did not at once recognize each other at this second unforeseen meeting; the young man, as well as the child, had then been of an age to which five years cannot be added without bringing with them most appreciable changes. For Graham, these years had been precisely that transition period in which a lad separates himself from the aggregate mass of youth, and stands forth in the world as a man in his own right, according to that which is in him. This tall, thin, brown young army doctor, who has passed brilliant examinations, who is already beginning to be known favorably in the profession, whose name has appeared at the end of more than one approved article in scientific reviews; who has travelled, seen something of Italy, Switzerland, Belgium; who for five years has been studying, thinking, living through youthful experiences and failures, and out-living some youthful illusions, cannot fail, one may be sure, to be a different personage, in many respects, from the fresh-hearted medical student who had sauntered away an idle Sunday among the woods and valleys round Chaudfontaine, and had looked with curious, half wondering eyes at the new little world disclosed to him at the hotel. As for our little Madelon, the small, round, pinafored child was hardly recognizable in this slim little girl, in a white frock, with brown hair that hung in short wayward tangling waves, instead of curling in soft ringlets all over her head; and yet Graham, who rarely forgot a face, was haunted by a vague remembrance of her eyes, with the peculiar look, half-startled, half-confiding, with which they met the first glance of stranger's. Madelon's brown eyes were the greatest charm of a face which was hardly pretty yet, though it had the promise of beauty in after years; to liken them to those of some dumb, soft, dark-eyed animal is to use a trite comparison; and yet there is,

perhaps, no other that so well describes eyes such as these, which seem charged with a meaning beyond that which their owner is able to express in words, or is, perhaps, even conscious of. When seen in children, they seem to contain a whole prophecy of their future lives, and in Madelon they had probably a large share in the powers of attraction which she undoubtedly possessed; few could resist their mute appeal, which, child as she was, went beyond her own thought, and touched deeper sympathies than any she could yet have known.

There was a moment's silence after Madelon had spoken, and then she once more turned from the window with a disappointed air.

"Pardon, Monsieur," she said again, "but can you tell me what time it is? Is it past eleven?"

"It is more than half-past," said Graham, looking at his watch. "Have you been waiting here long?"

"Since ten o'clock," said Madelon, "papa said he would be in by ten. I cannot think where he can be."

"He has probably found something to detain him," suggested Graham.

"No," answered Madelon, rejecting this obvious proposition; "for he had an appointment here; there is some one waiting for him now."

"Then he has perhaps come in without your knowing it?"

"I do not think so," said Madelon, "he would have called me; and besides, I should have seen him cross the court-yard. I saw you come in just now, Monsieur."

Nevertheless she left her station by the window, and moved slowly along the passage to their apartment; it was just opposite Graham's, and as she went in, leaving the door open, Horace, who had followed her without any very definite purpose, looked in. It was a tolerably large room, with a door to the left opening into a smaller apartment, Utrecht velvet chairs and sofa, a mantel-piece also covered with velvet, on which stood a clock, a tall looking-glass, and two lighted wax candles; a table in the middle with some packs of cards, and a liqueur bottle and glasses, and a bed on one side opposite the fire-place. The window looked on to a side street, noisy with the incessant rattling

of vehicles, and so narrow that the numerous lighted interiors of the houses opposite were visible to the most casual observer. A smell of smoking pervaded the room, explained by the presence of a young man, who held a cigar in one hand, while he leaned half out of the window, over the low iron balcony in front, shouting to some one in the street below. He looked round as Madelon came in, and slowly drew himself back into the room, exhibiting a lean, yellow face, surrounded with dishevelled hair, and ornamented by black unkempt beard and mustache.

"*Monsieur votre père* does not arrive apparently, Mademoiselle," he said.

"I have not seen him come in Monsieur," answered Madelon; "I thought he was perhaps here."

"Not at all, I have seen nothing of him this evening. But this is perhaps a trick that Monsieur le Papa is playing me; he fears to give me his little revenge of which he spoke, and wishes to keep out of my way. What do you say to that, Mademoiselle?"

"I am quite sure it is not so," answered Madelon, with a little defiant air. "I heard papa say it was quite by chance he had lost all that money to you, for you did not understand the first principles of the game."

"Ah! he said that? But it is lucky for us other poor devils that we have these chances sometimes! You will at least admit that, Mademoiselle?"

"Papa plays better than any one," says Madelon, retreating from argument to the safer ground of assertion, and still standing in the middle of the room in her defiant attitude, with her hands clasped behind her.

"Without a doubt, Mademoiselle; but then, as he says, we also have our chances. Well I cannot wait for mine this evening, for it is nearly midnight, and I have another appointment. These gentlemen will wonder what has become of me. Mademoiselle, I have the honor to wish you good evening."

He made a profound bow, and left the room.

Madelon gave a great sigh, and then came out into the passage again where Horace was standing. He had been a somewhat bewildered spectator of this queer little inter-

view, but the child evidently saw nothing out of the way in it, for she made no remark upon it, and only said rather piteously:

"I cannot imagine where papa can be; I do wish he would come back."

"Does he often stay out so late as this?" asked Graham.

"Oh! yes, often, but not when he says he is coming in early, or when he is expecting any one."

"And do you know where he is gone?"

"No, not at all. He said he was going to dine with some gentlemen, but I don't know where! Oh! do you think anything—anything can have happened?" cried Madelon, her hidden anxiety suddenly finding utterance.

"Indeed I do not," answered Graham, in his kindest voice. "His friends have persuaded him to stay late, I have no doubt; you must not be so uneasy—these things often happen, you know. Let us go and look out of the window again; perhaps we shall see him just coming in."

They went to the end of the corridor accordingly; but no one was to be seen, except the man who had just left M. Linders' apartment walking briskly across the moonlight space below, the great doors of the *porte-cochère* closing after him with a clang that resounded through the silent courtyard. Graham had nothing further to say in the way of consolation; he could think of no more possible contingencies to suggest, and indeed it was useless to go on reasoning concerning perfectly unknown conditions. Madelon, however, seemed a little reassured by his confident tone, and he changed the subject by asking her whether the gentleman who had just left was a friend of hers.

"Who? Monsieur Legros?" Madelon answered. "No, I don't know him much, and I do not like him at all; he comes sometimes to play with papa."

"To play with him!"

"Yes, at cards, you know—at *écarté*, or *piquet*, or one of those games."

"And it was with him that your father had an appointment?"

"Yes," said Madelon; he came last night, and papa

told him to be here again this evening at ten, and that is why I cannot think why he does not come."

She turned again disconsolately to the window, and there was another pause. Madelon relapsed into the silence habitual to her with strangers, and Graham hardly knew how to continue the conversation; yet he was unwilling to leave the child alone with her anxiety at that late hour: and besides, he was haunted by vague, floating memories that refused to shape themselves definitely. Sometime—somewhere—he had heard or seen, or dreamt of some one—he could not catch the connecting link which would serve to unite some remote, foregone experience with his present sensations.

He moved a little away from the window, and in so doing his foot struck against the book which Madelon had dropped on first seeing him, and he stooped to pick it up. It was a German story-book, full of bright colored pictures; so he saw as he opened it and turned over the leaves, scarcely thinking of what he did, when his eyes was suddenly arrested by the inscription on the fly-leaf. The book had been given to Madelon only the year before by a German lady she had met at Chaudfontaine, and there was her name, "Madeleine Linders," that of the donor, the date, and below, "Hôtel des Bains, Chaudfontaine." It was a revelation to Horace. Of course he understood it all now. Here was the clue to his confused recollections, to the strange little scene he had just witnessed. Another moonlit court-yard came to his remembrance, a gleaming, rushing river, a background of shadowy hills, and a little coy, wilful, chattering girl, with curly hair and great brown eyes —those very eyes that had been perplexing him not ten minutes ago.

"I think you and I have met before," he said to Madelon, smiling; "but I daresay you don't remember much about it, though I recollect you very well now."

"We have met before?" said Madelon. "Pardon Monsieur, but I do not very well recall it."

"At Chaudfontaine, five years ago, when you were quite a little girl. You are Madeleine Linders, are you not?"

"Yes, I am Madeleine Linders," she answered. "I have often been to Chaudfontaine; did you stay at the hotel there?"

"Only for one night," said Graham; "but you and I had a long talk together in the court-yard that evening. Let me see, how can I recall it to you? Ah! there was a little green and gold fish—"

"Was that you?" cried Madelon, her face suddenly brightening with a flush of intelligence and pleasure. "I have it still, that little fish. Ah! how glad I am now that I did not give it away! That gentleman was so kind to me, I shall never forget him. But it was you!" she added, with a sudden recognition of Graham's identity.

"It was indeed," he said laughing. "So you have thought of me sometimes since then? But I am afraid you would not have remembered me if I had not told you who I was."

"I was such a little girl then," said Madelon, coloring. "Five years ago—why I was not six years old; but I remember you very well now," she added, smiling up at him. "I have often thought of you, Monsieur, and I am so glad to see you again."

She said it with a little naïve air of frankness and sincerity which was very engaging, giving him her hand as she spoke.

"I am glad you have not quite forgotten me," said Graham, sitting down by her on the window seat; "but indeed you have grown so much, I am not sure I should have recollected you, if I had not seen your name here. What have you been doing ever since? Have you ever been to Chaudfontaine again?"

"Oh, very often," said Madelon. "We go there almost every year for a little while—not this year though, for we were at Wiesbaden till three weeks ago, and then papa had to come to Paris at once."

"And do you still go about everywhere with your papa, or do you go to school sometimes?"

"To school! oh no, never," said Madelon, not without some wonder at the idea. "Papa would not send me to school. I should not like it at all, and neither would he.

I know he would not get on at all well without me, and I love travelling about with him. Last winter we were in Italy."

"And you never come to England?"

"No, never. I asked papa once if he would not go there, and he said no, that we should not like it at all, it was so cold and *triste* there, one never amused one's-self."

"But I thought you had some relations there," said Graham. "Surely I saw an uncle with you who was English?"

"Oh yes, Uncle Charles; but he never went to England either, and he died a long time ago. I don't know of any other relations."

"So you never talk English now, I suppose? Do you remember telling me to speak English, because I spoke French so funnily?"

"No," said Madelon, coloring and laughing. "How is it possible I can have been so rude, Monsieur? I think you speak it very well. But I have not forgotten my English, for I have some books, and often we meet English or American gentlemen, so that I still talk it sometimes."

"And German too," said Horace, looking at her book.

"Yes, and Italian; I learnt that last winter at Florence. We meet a great many different people, you know, so I don't forget."

"And you are always travelling about?"

"Yes, always; I should not like to live in one place, I think, and papa would not like it either, he says. Do you remember, papa, Monsieur?"

"Very well," said Graham; and indeed he recalled perfectly the little scene in the salle-à-manger of the Chaudfontaine hotel—the long dimly-lighted room, the two men playing at cards, and the little child nestling close up to the fair one whom she called papa. "Yes, I remember him very well," he added, after a moment's pause.

"How strange that you should see us here again!" said Madelon. "Did you know we were staying in the hotel, Monsieur?"

"Not at all," answered Horace, smiling. "I only ar

rived yesterday, and had no notion that I should find an old acquaintance to welcome me."

"How fortunate that I was waiting here, and that you saw my name in that book," said Madelon, evidently looking on the whole as a great event, brought about by a more remarkable combination of circumstances than every-day life as a rule afforded. "Without that you would not have known who I was, perhaps? Papa will be very glad to see you again. Ah, how I wish he would come!" she added, all her anxieties suddenly revived.

"Do you always sit up for him when he is so late?" said Graham. "Surely it would be wiser for you to go to bed."

"That is just what I said to Mademoiselle an hour ago," said a kind, cheery voice behind them, belonging to Madame Lavaux, the mistress of the hotel. "Of what use, I say, is it for her to sit up waiting for her papa, who will not come any the sooner for that."

"Ah! Madame, I must wait," said Madelon. "Papa will come soon."

"But, *ma chère petite*—" began Madame.

"I must wait," repeated Madelon, piteously; "I always sit up for him."

Graham thought he could not do better than leave her in the hands of the landlady, and with a friendly good-night, and a promise to come and see her the next day, he went back to his own room. In a few minutes, he heard Madame pass along the corridor and go upstairs to bed; but, though tired enough himself after a day of Paris sight-seeing, he could not make up his mind to do the same, when, on opening his door, he saw Madelon standing where he had left her. He could not get rid of the thought of this lonely little watcher at the end of the passage, and taking up a book he began to read. From time to time he looked out, but there was no change in the posture of affairs; through the half-open door opposite he could see the lights burning in the still empty room, and the small figure remained motionless at the moonlit window. All sounds of life and movement were hushed in the hotel, all the clocks had long since struck midnight, and he was considering whether he

should not go and speak to Madelon again, when he heard a faint cry, and then a rush of light feet along the passage and down the staircase.

"So he has come at last," thought Graham, laying down his book with a sense of relief, not sorry to have his self imposed vigil brought to an end. He still sat listening, however; his door was ajar, and he thought he should hear the father and child come up together. There was a moment's silence as the sound of the footsteps died away, and then succeeded a quick opening and shutting of doors, the tread of hasty feet, a confusion of many voices speaking at once, a sudden clamor and stir breaking in on the stillness, and then suddenly subdued and hushed, as if to suit the prevailing quiet of the sleeping house.

"Something must have happened," thought Graham. "That poor child!—perhaps her father has, after all, met with some accident!" He left his room and ran quickly downstairs. The confused murmur of voices grew louder as he approached the hall, and on turning the last angle of the staircase, he at once perceived the cause of the disturbance.

A little group was collected in the middle of the hall, the night porter, one or two of the servants of the hotel, and some men in blouses, all gathered round a tall prostrate man, half lying on a bench placed under the centre lamp, half supported by two men, who had apparently just carried him in. He was quite insensible, his head had fallen forward on his breast, and was bound with a handkerchief that had been tied round to stanch the blood from a wound in his forehead; his neckcloth was unfastened, and his coat thrown back to give him more air. The little crowd was increasing every moment, as the news spread through the house; the *porte-cochère* stood wide open, and outside in the street a *fiacre* could be seen, standing in the moonlight.

"A doctor must be fetched at once," some one was saying, just as Horace came up and recognized not without difficulty, in the pale disfigured form before him, the handsome fair-haired M. Linders he had met at Chaudfontaine five years before.

"I am a doctor," he said, coming forward. "Perhaps I can be of some use here."

No one seemed to notice him at first—a lad had already started in quest of a surgeon, and jumping into the empty *fiacre* that had brought the injured man to the hotel, was driving off; but Madelon turned round at the sound of Graham's voice, and looked up in his face with a new expression of hope in her eyes, instead of the blank, bewildered despair with which she had been gazing at her father and the strange faces around. To the poor child it seemed as if she had lived through an unknown space of terror and misery during the few minutes that had elapsed since from the passage window she had seen the *fiacre* stop, and, with the presentiment of evil which had been haunting her during these last hours of suspense, intensified to conviction, had flown downstairs only to meet her father's insensible form as he was carried in. She was kneeling now by his side, and was chafing one of his cold hands between her poor little trembling fingers; but when she saw Graham standing at the edge of the circle she got up, and went to him.

"Will you come to papa?" she said, taking him by both hands and drawing him forward.

"Don't be frightened," said Horace, in his kind, cheerful voice, trying to encourage her, for her face and lips were colorless, and she was trembling as with a sudden chill. He put one arm round her, and came forward to look at M. Linders.

"Allow me," he said; and this time his voice commanded attention, and imposed a moment's silence on the confusion of tongues. "I am a doctor, and can perhaps be of some use; but I must beg of you not to press round in this way. Can any one tell me what has happened?" he added, as he bent over M. Linders.

"It was an accident, Monsieur," said a man of the working-class, standing by, "this poor gentleman must have had some kind of fit, I think. I was crossing the Boulevards with him about ten o'clock; there were a good many carriages about, but we were going quietly enough, when suddenly I saw him stop, put his hand to his head, and fall down in the road. I had to run just then to get safely across myself, and when I reached the other side, I saw a

great confusion, and heard that a carriage had driven straight over him."

"There was a moment's pause, and Madelon said in a tremulous whisper, "Papa used to have *vertiges* last winter but he got quite well again."

"To be sure," said Graham; "and so we must hope he will now. That was more than two hours ago," he said, turning to the man—"what have you been doing ever since?"

"We carried him into the nearest *café*, Monsieur, and some proposed taking him to a hospital, but after a time we found a letter in his pocket addressed to this hotel, and we thought it best to bring him here, as he might have friends; so we got a *fiacre*. But it was a long way off, and we were obliged to come very slowly."

"A hospital would perhaps have been the better plan," said Graham; "or you should have found a doctor before moving him. However, now he must be carried upstairs without further delay. My poor child," he said, turning to Madelon, "you can do no good here—you had better go with Madame, who will take care of you; will you not, Madame?" he added, turning to the landlady, who, roused from her bed, had just appeared, after a hasty toilette.

"Yes, yes, she can come with me," said Madame Lavaux, who was not in the best of tempers at the disturbance; "but I beg of you not to make more noise than you can help, Messieurs, or I shall have the whole house disturbed, and half the people leaving to-morrow."

The sad little procession moved quietly enough up the stairs, and along the corridor to M. Linders' room. Graham had gone on in front, but Madame Lavaux had held back Madelon when she would have pressed forward by the side of the men who were carrying her father, and she had yielded at first in sheer bewilderment. She had passed through more than one phase of emotion in the course of the last ten minutes, poor child! The first overwhelming shock and terror had passed away, when Graham's reassuring voice and manner had convinced her that her father was not dead; but she had still felt too stunned and confused to do more than obey passively, as she watched him carefully

raised, and slowly carried from the hall. By the time they reached the top of the staircase, however, her natural energy began to reassert itself; and, as she saw him disappear within the bedroom, her impatient eagerness to be at his side again could not be restrained. His recent illness was still too fresh a memory for the mere sight of his present suffering and insensibility to have any of the terrors of novelty, after the first shock was over, and all her former experiences went to prove that his first words on recovering consciousness would be to ask for her. Her one idea was that she must go at once and nurse him; she had not heeded, nor perhaps even heard Graham's last words, and she was about to follow the men into the bedroom, when Madame Lavaux interposed to prevent her.

"Run upstairs to my room, *petite*," she said; "you will be out of the way there, and I will come to you presently."

"No," said Madelon, refusing point-blank, "I am going with papa."

"But it is not possible, my child; you will only be in the way. You heard what M. le Docteur said?"

"I *will* go to papa!" cries Madelon, trembling with agitation and excitement; "he will want me, I know he will, I am never in his way! You have no right to prevent my going to him, Madame! Let me pass, I say," for Madame Lavaux was standing between her and the door of the room into which M. Linders had been carried.

"*Allons donc*, we must be reasonable," says Madame. "Your papa does not want you now, and little girls should do as they are told. If you had gone to bed an hour ago, as I advised, you would have known nothing about all this till to-morrow. Eh, these children! there is no doing anything with them; and these men," she continued, with a sigh, "the noise they make with their great boots! and precisely Madame la Comtesse, *au premier*, had an *attaque des nerfs* this evening, and said the house was as noisy as a barrack—but these things always happen at unfortunate moments!"

No one answered this little speech, which, in fact, was addressed to no one in particular. It was, perhaps, not al-

together Madame Lavaux's fault that through long habit her instincts as the proprietor of a large hotel had ended by predominating so far over her instincts as a woman as always to come to hand first. The nice adjustment between the claims of conscience and the claims of self-interest, between the demands of her bills and the demands of never-satisfied, exacting travellers, alone involved a daily recurring struggle, in which the softer emotions would have been altogether out of place, we may suppose. In the present instance she considered it a hard case that her house should be turned topsy-turvy at such an untimely hour, and its general propriety endangered thereby; and Madelon's grief, which at another time would have excited her compassion, had for the moment taken the unexpected form of determined opposition, and could only be looked upon as another element of disturbance. Madelon herself, however, who could hardly be expected to regard her father's accident with a view to those wider issues that naturally presented themselves to Madame Lavaux, simply felt that she was being cruelly ill-used. She had not attended to a word of this last speech, but nevertheless she had detected the want of sympathy, and it by no means increased her desire to accede to Madame's wishes.

"I *will* go to papa," she repeated, the sense of antagonism that had come uppermost gaining strength and vehemence from the consciousness of the underlying grief and sore trouble that had aroused it, "or I will stay here if you will not let me pass; rather than go away, I will stand here all night."

Graham had heard nothing of this little altercation, but now coming out of the bed-room to speak to Madame Lavaux, he found a most determined little Madelon standing with her hands clasped behind her, and her back set firmly against the wall, absolutely refusing to retreat.

She sprang forward, however, as soon as she saw him.

"I may go to papa now, may I not?" she cried.

"Mademoiselle wants to go to her papa," says Madame, at the same moment, "I beg of you, Monsieur, to tell her it is impossible, and that she had better come with me. She asserts that her father will want her."

"That is all nonsense," said Graham hastily; "of course she cannot come in now," then noticing Madelon's poor little face, alternately white, and flushed with misery and passion, he said, "Listen to me, Madelon; you can do your father no good now. He would not know you, my poor child, and you would only be in the way. But I promise you that by-and-by you shall see him."

"By-and-by," said Madelon; "how soon?"

"As soon as we can possibly manage it."

Nothing, perhaps, would have induced Madelon at that moment to have given into Madame Lavaux's unsupported persuasions, but she yielded at once to Horace; indeed her sudden passion had already died away at the sight of his face, at the sound of the kind voice which she had somehow begun to associate with a sense of help and protection. She did not quite give up her point even now, however.

"I need not go upstairs," she said, with trembling lips and tears in her eyes. "I may go into my own room, may I not?"

"Your room? Which is that?" asked Graham.

"This one—next to papa," she said, pointing to the door that led into the passage.

"Yes, you can stay there if you like; but don't you think that you would be better with Madame Lavaux, than all by yourself in there?"

"No, I would rather stay here," she answered, and then pausing a moment at the door, "I may come and see him presently?" she added wistfully, "I always nursed him when he was ill before."

"I am sure you are a very good little nurse," said Graham kindly, "and I will tell you when you may come; but it will not be just yet. So the best thing you can do will be to go to bed, and then you will be quite ready for to-morrow."

He had no time to say more, for his services were required. He gave Madelon a candle, closed the door that communicated between the two rooms, and she was left alone.

CHAPTER II.

A Farewell Letter.

MADELON was left alone to feel giddy, helpless, bewildered in the reaction from strong excitement and passion. She was quite tired and worn-out, too, with her long watching and waiting; too weary to cry even, or to think over all that had happened.

She did not go to bed, however; that would have been the last thing she would have thought of doing; for, Graham's last words notwithstanding, she had a notion that in a few minutes she would be called to come and watch by her father, as she had often done in the old days at Florence; so she only put down her candle on the table, and curled herself up in a big arm-chair; and in five minutes, in spite of her resolution to keep wide awake till she should be summoned, she was sound asleep.

Low voices were consulting together in the next room, people coming in and out; the French doctor who had been sent for arriving; cautious footsteps, and soft movements about the injured man. But Madelon heard none of them, she slept soundly on, and only awoke at last to see her candle go out with a splutter, and the gray light of dawn creeping chilly into the room. She awoke with a start and shiver of cold, and sat up wondering to find herself there; then a rush of recollections came over her of last night, of her father's accident, and she jumped up quickly, straightening herself, stretching her little stiff limbs, and pushing back her tumbled hair with both hands from the sleepy eyes that were hardly fairly open even now.

Her first movement was towards the door between the two bedrooms, but she checked herself, remembering that Monsieur le Docteur had told her she must not go in there

till she was called. There was another door to her room leading into the corridor, and just at that moment she heard two people stop outside it, talking together in subdued tones.

"Then I leave the case altogether in your hands," said a strange man's voice. "I am absolutely obliged to leave Paris for B—— by the first train this morning, and cannot be back till to-morrow night; so, as you say, Monsieur, you are in Paris for some time—"

"For the next few days at any rate," answered the other; and Madelon recognized Graham's voice and English accent, "long enough to see this case through to the end, I am afraid."

"If anything can be done, you will do it, I am sure," interrupted the other with warmth. "You must permit me to say, Monsieur, as an old man may say to a young *confrère*, that it is seldom one meets with so much coolness and skill in such a very critical case. Nothing else could have saved—"

The voices died away as the speakers walked towards the end of the passage. Madelon had hardly taken in the sense of the few sentences she had heard; she was only anxious now to see Graham and ask if she might go to her father, so she opened her door softly and crept into the passage, meeting Horace as he returned towards the sick-room after seeing the French doctor off. He looked down on the little figure all pale and ruffled in the cold gray light.

"Why, I thought you were asleep," he said. "Would you like to see your father now? You may come in, but you must be very quiet, for he is dozing."

"Then he is better?" said Madelon, anxiously.

Graham did not answer, he opened the door and led her in. The room looked cheerless with the shaded night-lamp casting long shadows, which mingled with those that the growing daylight was chasing away. M. Linders was lying with his head supported on a heap of pillows; his forehead was bandaged where the deep cut had been given just above the brow, and he looked deadly pale; his eyes were closed, he was breathing heavily, and Madelon thought that, as Graham had told her, he was asleep; but it was, in fact, rather a kind of stupor, from which louder noises than the sound

of her soft footfall would have failed to rouse him. She went on tiptoe up to his bedside, and stood gazing at him for a moment, and then with a swift, silent movement buried her face in her hands, and burst into an agony of crying.

"He is very ill—oh! is he going to die?" was all the answer she could give in a hoarse whisper to Graham's attempts at comfort, trying the while to smother her sobs, so that they might not break out and wake her father.

"I hope not—I hope not," said Horace, quite grieved at the sight of her distress; "but you must not cry so, Madelon; how are you to nurse him and help him to get well again if you do?"

She stopped sobbing a little at this, and tried to check her tears.

"Do you really think he will get well again?" she said; "he looks so ill."

Graham did not at once answer. In truth, he saw no prospect of M. Linders' ultimate recovery, though he would probably regain consciousness, and might, perhaps, linger on for a few days. But there always remained the hope born of a determination not to despair, and it seemed cruel, at that moment, not to share it with our poor little Madelon.

"We must hope so," he said at last, "we must always hope for the best, you know; but he must be kept very quiet, so you and I, Madelon, must do our best to watch him, and see that he is not disturbed."

"Yes," said Madelon, drying her eyes quite now. "I will take care of him."

"Very well, then, if you will sit with him now, I will go and speak to Madame Lavaux, if she is up; there are several arrangements I have to make."

He went away, leaving Madelon contented for the moment, since she could sit and watch by her father; she remained motionless, her eyes fixed on his face, her hands clasped round her knees, her whole mind so absorbed in keeping perfectly quiet, the one thing she could do for him just then, that she hardly ventured to breathe. But not even yet did she understand the full meaning of what had happened, nor clearly comprehend all that she had to dread. She was not really afraid that her father would not recover;

she knew indeed that he was very ill, much worse than he had ever been at Florence, at that it might be a long, long time before he would be well again, but she did not think that he was going to die. She had asked the question indeed, prompted by an instinctive terror that had seized her, but in fact she hardly knew what death meant, much less had she ever conceived of her father as dead, or imagined life without him. Nevertheless, the sudden panic had left a nameless, unrecognized fear lurking somewhere, which gave an added intensity to her desire that he would wake up and speak to her once more; and sometimes the beating of her own heart seemed to deafen her, so that she could not hear the sound of his heavy irregular breathing, and then nothing but the dread of disturbing him could have prevented her from jumping up and going to him to make sure that he was still sleeping. When would he awaken and look at her and speak to her again? It appeared so long since she had heard his voice, and seen him smile at her; since he had wished her good-bye the evening before, she seemed to have lived through such long hours of unimagined terror and sorrow, and all without being able to turn to him for the sure help, for the loving protection and sympathy that had ever been ready for his little Madelon; and even now, he did not know how she was watching him, nor how she was longing to go to him and kiss him, to put her arms round his neck, and lay her soft little cheek caressingly against his. This thought was the most grievous of all to Madelon just then, and the big tears came into her eyes again, and fell slowly one by one into her lap.

Graham, however, returning presently, somehow seemed to bring courage and consolation with him. Madelon brightened up at once when he sat down by her and told her that he had asked Madame Lavaux to send them up some coffee, so that they might have it together there; and then, seeing the tears on her sad little face, he assured her in his kind way that her father would wake up presently and speak to her, and that, in the meantime, she need not sit quite so still, as she would not disturb him if she moved about quietly: and when, by-and-by, the *café-au-lait* arrived, they had their little meal together, while he told her in a low

voice how her father had partially recovered his consciousness in the night and asked for her, but had been quite satisfied when he heard she had gone to bed, and had afterwards gone off to sleep as Madelon saw him now.

"By-the-by, Madelon," Graham said presently, "tell me if you have any relations living in Paris, or any friends that you go and visit sometimes?"

"No," says Madelon wondering, "I have no relations—only papa."

"No uncles, or aunts, or cousins?"

"No," said Madelon again, "only Uncle Charles, who died, you know."

"Ah, yes—that was an English uncle; but your papa, has he no brothers or sisters in Paris, or anywhere else?"

"I never heard of any," said Madelon, to whom this idea of possible relations seemed quite a new one. "I never go to visit any one."

"Then you have no friends living in Paris—no little companions, no ladies who come to see you?"

"No," answers Madelon, shaking her head, "we don't know any one in Paris, except some gentlemen who come to play with papa—like Monsieur Legros, you know—only some are nicer than he is; but I don't know the names of them all. At Wiesbaden I knew a Russian princess, who used to ask me to go and see her at the hotel—oh, yes, and a German Countess, and a great many people that we met at the tables and at the balls, but I daresay I shall never see them again; we meet so many people, you know."

"And you have no other friends?"

"Oh, yes," said Madelon, her eyes shining suddenly, "there was the American artist, who lived in our house in Florence, and the old German who taught me to sing and play the violin; I was very fond of him, he was so good—so good."

"Who were they?" asked Graham.

Madelon explained, not in the least understanding the purport of all these questions, but her explanation did not help Graham much. In truth, he was revolving some anxious thoughts. In accepting the charge of this sick man, he felt that he had incurred a certain responsibility, not only to-

wards M. Linders, but towards his little girl, and any relations or friends that he might have. It was on Madelon's account above all that he felt uneasy; what was to become of her if her father died—and Graham had little doubt that he was dying—all friendless and alone in the world, as she would apparently be? Had any arrangements for the future been made, any provision left for her? What was to become of this poor child, clinging so closely to her father, and so dependent upon him that she seemed to have no thoughts nor ideas apart from him?

Graham had been questioning Madame Lavaux as to what she knew of M. Linders and his life, and gained much information on some points, though very little on others. Madame Lavaux had readily related the history of Madelon's birth and Madame Linders' death. It was a story she was fond of telling; it had been a little romance in the ordinary routine of hotel life, and one in which, when she had duly set forth M. Linders' heartlessness and her own exertions, she felt that she must shine in an exceptionally favorable light; and indeed it was so pitiful a tale that her hearers could not but share the indignation and compassion she felt and expressed when she spoke of *cette pauvre dame*, who so young and so beautiful had been left alone to give birth to her infant, and, still alone, to die four months later. But when Graham endeavored to get any facts bearing directly upon the present emergency, he found Madame Lavaux less well informed. M. Linders had come to her hotel year after year, she said, and she had always taken him in on the little girl's account (who was a *chère petite*, though troublesome sometimes, as children would be); otherwise she would have been sorry to have such a *mauvais sujet* about the house, in and out at all hours, and queer-looking men sitting up with him half the night. Had he any relations or friends? That she did not know, she had never seen or heard of any, but she did not wonder at that—they did well to keep clear of him, a bad man, who had broken more hearts than his wife's, she would answer for it. For the rest, she knew little about him, she added, with a sudden fit of professional reticence, induced by the recollection that it might be as well not to gossip too much about the affairs

of her *clientèle;* he came and went, paid his bill regularly enough, generally seemed to have money at his command, and of course it was not for her to inquire how he got it, though she might have her suspicions. What was to become of his little girl in case of his death? Madame had never thought of that: did Monsieur think he was going to die? In that case how much better to have taken him to the hospital; a death in the house was always so inconvenient and disagreeable—not that she had grudged it to that *pauvre* Madame Linders, but this was a different thing altogether; would he certainly die? Monsieur said he did not know, one must always hope, but the case was a grave one, and seeing that Madame could give him no help, he left her.

He had questioned Madelon in the hope that she would be able to tell him of some one for whom he could send, or to whom he could at least write, but here again he was baffled, and he could only wait now for the moment when M. Linders should recover consciousness.

The hotel was all astir by this time with life and movement, doors opening and shutting, footsteps up and down the staircases and corridors, voices talking, calling, grumbling, downstairs eating and drinking going on with much clattering of plates and dishes, fiacres and omnibuses driving up, tourists setting off in gay parties for their day's sight-seeing, luggage being moved, travellers coming, travellers going, to England, to the north, to the south, to the ends of the earth—all the busy restless hotel life going on except in this one silent room, where two people sat very quietly watching a third, who, as one of them foresaw sadly enough, would never take part in all this stir and bustle of life again. Outside was broad sunny daylight now, but within it was all dim and cool, for the night had been hot, and the window stood wide open, and now the morning air blew freshly through the Venetian shutters, that were closed to darken the room and shut out the sun, which later would shine full upon them. The morning hours slipped away; there was nothing to be done while M. Linders remained in this state, and Madelon, by Horace's advice, took a book, and seated herself on a low stool by the window to read. Now and then she would stand looking at her father with a

most pitiful yearning in her great brown eyes; once or twice, M. Linders, in his dull slumber, half torpor, half sleep, seemed in some sort conscious of her presence; he moved his head uneasily, said "Madeleine," and then some low muttered words which she could not catch, but he never quite roused up, and after each throb of expectation and hope, she could only return to her book, and her silent watching.

Graham went in and out, or sat reading and writing at the table, and at twelve o'clock he made Madelon go downstairs to breakfast with Madame Lavaux in her own little sitting-room. Madame, who was really very fond of her, had forgotten all about the altercation of the night before. Indeed she was both good-natured and kind-hearted as soon as she could allow her better impulses to have their own way; but she was a little apt, as are most people to whom life resolves itself into a narrow ministering to their personal pains and pleasures, to look upon untoward occurrences as evidence of the causeless animosity of some vague impersonality, continually on the watch to adjust the largest events of life so as to occasion her particular inconvenience. If half Paris and its environs had been destroyed by an earthquake, her first impression of the catastrophe would very possibly have been that it could not have happened at a worse moment for raising the price of early asparagus, though the further reflection that the general want of accommodation would justify her in doubling her hotel tariff, might in some measure have restored her faith in the fitness of things. After this, she would have found time to be overwhelmed with compassion for the sufferers. M. Linders' accident, she found, had, as yet, been attended with no evil results, so far as she was concerned; no one had been disturbed in the night, no one had left, so that, for the moment, it had been safely transferred to that region of abstract facts which she could consider dispassionately, and judge by the light of her kindly impulses; and it was under the influence of these that she was now bent on petting and making much of Madelon, giving her cakes and confitures and all kinds of good things. On second thoughts she had rejected the idea that M. Linders was going to die; it would be so very troub-

lesome and inconvenient, that she found it pleasanter to persuade herself that he would surely recover; and now, on the strength of this conviction, and with a kind wish to console Madelon, she became so encouraging, so certain he would be well again in a few weeks—in a few weeks did she say?—in a few days—with this clever English doctor, who, as she improvised for the occasion, every one knew was one of the first doctors in London—with all this Madame so encouraged and cheered our Madelon that she came upstairs again at the end of an hour looking quite bright, and almost expecting to see some wonderful change for the better in her father. M. Linders however still lay as she had left him, and perhaps the sight of his pale, bloodless face chilled her, for she crept silently to her corner, and took up her book again, without saying a word of her new hopes. Presently Graham, looking up from his writing, found that she had done the best thing possible under the circumstances, for, with her book lying open upon her lap, and her head resting against the window-frame, she had fallen fast asleep. He went up to her, raised her gently in his arms, and carried her into her own room; so perfectly sound asleep was she, that she had hardly stirred, even when he laid her on her bed; and then, drawing the curtain round her, he left her to herself.

If this long morning had passed slowly and sadly for our sorrowful little Madelon, it had been a time of anxiety and uneasiness enough for Horace Graham also; who had never, I daresay, felt more nervous than during these quiet hours when M. Linders, partly from the effects of his accident, partly from the opiates that had been given him, lay unconscious. He was young in his profession, and though clever and skilled enough in the technical part, he had had little experience in what may be called the moral part of it, and he positively shrank from the moment when this man, of whose life and character he knew something, should wake up and he should have to tell him that he was dying. It was so absolutely necessary, too, that he should know the danger he was in; for if, as was too probable from his mode of life, his affairs were in disorder, and his arrangements for his child's future had still to be made, the time that re-

mained to him was in all human probability but short. For the rest, Graham felt in himself small capacity for preaching or exhortation, and indeed from a professional point of view he dreaded a possible outburst of excitement and remorse, as lessening his last chance of saving his patient's life; and yet to him—young, full of energy, and hope, and resolution, though no nearer perfection and tried wisdom than any other man with crude beliefs and enthusiasms and untested powers for good or evil—to him death still appeared one of the most awful facts in life, and he could not think unmoved of the task of announcing to such a man as this that his last chances were over, and such life as one can live in this world was for him a thing of the past forever now. Not a twelvemonth later, Graham had stood by so many dying men, had listened to so many dying speeches, had seen death met in so many forms, and with such strange variety of character, with indifference or calmness, or resignation, with wild triumph, or wilder remorse, that he looked back with a sort of wonder on his present inexperience and perplexity. Not the less, however, did he now sit framing a dozen speeches one after the other, dreading the effect of saying too much, and fearing to say too little, till, about an hour after Madelon had fallen asleep, M. Linders at length stirred, opened his eyes, and tried to move.

Graham was at his side instantly, and the sick man gazed up at him in silence for a moment.

"What has happened?" he said at last in a feeble voice; "who are you? where is Madelon?"

"Madelon is in the next room asleep," answered Graham; "you met with an accident last night—I am an English doctor staying in the hotel—the French one had to leave—do you remember?"

He paused between each sentence, and M. Linders' eyes, which were fixed upon him as he spoke, gradually acquired an expression of intelligence as memory returned to him. He closed them again and turned away his head.

"Yes, I remember something about it," he said, "but—*que diable*—I cannot move a limb; am I much hurt?"

"A good deal," said Graham, helping him to raise himself a little. "You had better keep quiet, and take

this," giving him a cordial, as M. Linders sank back exhausted.

"That is better," he said, after a few minutes of struggling breathing. "So I am a good deal hurt? Am I—am I going to die by chance, M. le Docteur?"

He spoke in his old half-sarcastic, half-cynical way, but with a feeble, gasping voice, that made an effect of contrast, as of the tragic face espied behind the grinning mask. Somehow it touched Graham, burdened as he was with the consciousness of the death-warrant he had to pronounce, and he paused before answering. M. Linders noticed his hesitation.

"Bah!" he said, "speak, then; do you think I am afraid—a coward that fears to know the worst? I shall not be the first man that has died, nor, in all probability, the last. We ought to be used to it by this time, *nous autres!*"

"Perhaps it is always best to be prepared for the worst," says Graham, recovering himself at this address, and taking refuge at last in a conventional little speech. "And though we must always hope for the best, I do not think it right to conceal from you, Monsieur, that you are very much injured and shaken. If you have any arrangements to make, any one you would wish to send for, or to see, I earnestly advise you to lose no time."

He watched M. Linders narrowly as he spoke, and saw a sudden gleam of fear or excitement light up his dull eyes for a moment, while his fingers clutched nervously at the sheet, but that was all the sign he made.

"So—I am going to die?" he said, after a pause. "Well—that is ended, then. Send for any one? Whom should I send for?" he added with some vehemence. "For your priests, I suppose, to come and light candles, and make prayers over me—is that what you are thinking of, by chance? I won't have one of them—you need not think it, do you hear?—not one."

"Pardon me," said Graham, "but it was not of priests I was thinking just then—indeed, it seems to me that, at these moments, a man can turn nowhere so safely as to his God; but there are others—"

He spoke quietly enough, but M. Linders interrupted

him with a fierce, hoarse whisper. "I can arrange my own affairs. I have no one to send to—no one I wish to see. Let me die in peace."

In spite of his assumed indifference, his whole soul was filled and shaken with a sudden dread terror; for the moment he had forgotten even his child. Graham saw it, but could not urge him further just then; he only passed his arm under the pillow, so as to raise his head a little, and then said, with such professional cheerfulness as he could muster:

"*Allons*, Monsieur, you must have courage. Calm yourself; you are not going to die yet, and we must hope for the best. You may live to see many people yet."

M. Linders appeared scarcely to hear what he was saying; but in a few moments his face relaxed, and a new expression came into it, which seemed to soften the gray, ghastly look.

"My poor little girl!" he said, with a sort of groan—"my little Madelon!—to leave thee all alone, *pauvre petite!*"

"It was precisely of her that I wished to speak," said Graham. "I am afraid, in any case, you must look forward to a long illness, and, on her account, is there no friend, no relation you would wish to send for?"

"I have no friends—no relations," said M. Linders, impatiently. "A long illness? Bah! M. le Docteur, I know and you know that I am going to die—to-day, to-morrow, who knows?—and she will be left alone. She has no one in the world but me, and she has been foolish enough to love me—my little one?"

He paused for a moment, and then went on, with a vehemence that struggled for utterance, with his hoarse, feeble voice and failing breath.

"If this cursed accident had happened but one day sooner or later, I could have left her a fortune—but a superb fortune; only one day sooner—I had it two days ago—or to-morrow—I should have had my revenge last night of that *scélérat*—that devil—that Legros, and won back the money he cheated me of, he—he—of all men, a mere beginner, a smatterer—ah! if I had been the man I once was, it would have been a different account to settle—"

He lay back panting, but began again before Graham could speak.

"I only want time—give me a little time, and my little Madelon shall have such a fortune as shall make her independent of every one; or stay, why not send for him now? I will give you his address—yes, now—now at once, before it is too late!"

"That is quite impossible, Monsieur," Graham answered with decision; "and if you agitate yourself in this way, I must refuse to listen to another word. You are doing all you can to lessen your chances of recovery."

"You do not play, Monsieur?" said M. Linders, struck with a new idea, and not in the least attending to what Graham was saying.

"Do you want to win my money?" said the young man, half smiling. "No, I do not play, nor, if I did, have I any money to lose. Leave all these notions alone, I entreat of you; calm yourself; you need not trouble yourself to speak much, but just tell me what your wishes are concerning your little girl—in any case it is always best to be prepared. Have you made any will? Is there any one to whose care you would wish to entrust her in the event of your death?"

M. Linders had exhausted his strength and his passion for the moment, and answered quietly enough. No he had made no will, he said—of what use? Everything he had was hers, of course—little enough too, as matters stood. He owned he did not know what was to become of her; he had made no arrangements—he had never thought of its coming to this, and then he had always counted on leaving her a fortune. He had sometimes thought of letting her be brought up for the stage; that might be arranged now if he could see S——, the manager of the Théâtre ——. Could he be sent for at once?

"Certainly, if you really wish it," answered Graham with some hesitation, and then added frankly, "I have no sort of right to offer an opinion, but will you not consider a moment before fixing on such a fate for your child? She is surely very young to be thrown among strangers, on such a doubtful career, especially without you at hand to protect her."

"It is true I shall not be there," said the father with a groan; "I had forgotten that. And I shall never see my little one grown up. Ah! what is to become of her?"

"Has she no relations?" said Graham, "in England for instance—"

"In England!" cried M. Linders fiercely, "what could make you fancy that?"

"I had understood that her mother was English—" began Graham.

"You are right, Monsieur; her mother was English, but she has no English relations, or, if she has, they are nothing to her, and she shall never know them. No," he said slowly, after a pause, "I suppose there is only one thing to be done and, yet I would almost rather she lay here dead by my side, that we might be buried together in one grave; it would perhaps be happier for her, poor little one! Ah, what a fate! but it must be—you are right, I cannot send her out alone and friendless into the world, she must go to her aunt."

"She has an aunt, then?" said Graham, with some surprise.

"Yes, Monsieur, she has an aunt, my sister Thérèse, with whom I quarrelled five and twenty years ago, and whom I have cordially hated ever since; and if ever woman deserved to be hated, she does;" and indeed, though he had not mentioned his sister's name for years, the very sound of it seemed to revive the old enmity in all its fresh bitterness. "She lives near Liége," he went on presently. "She is the Superior of a convent there, having risen to that eminence through her superior piety and manifold good works, doubtless. Mon Dieu!" he cried, with another of his sudden impotent bursts of passion and tenderness, "that it should have come to this, that I should shut up my little one in a convent! And she will be miserable—she will blame me, she will think me cruel; but what can I do?—what can I do?"

"But it seems to me the best thing possible," said Graham, who, in truth, was not a little relieved by this sudden and unexpected solution of all difficulties. "So many children are educated in convents, and are very happy there;

she will be certainly well taught and cared for, and you must trust to your sister for the future."

"Never!" he said, half raising himself on his elbow with a mighty effort. "Well taught!—yes, I know the sort of teaching she will get there; she will be taught to hate and despise me, and then they will make her a nun—they will try to do it, but that shall never be! I will make Madelon promise me that. My little one a nun!—I will not have it! Ah! I risk too much; she shall not go!"

He fell back on the pillow gasping, panting, almost sobbing, all pretence and semblance of cynicism and indifference gone in this miserable moment of weakness and despair. Was it for this, then, that he had taught his child to love him—that he had watched and guarded and cherished her—that he should place her now in the hands of his enemy, and that she should learn to hate his memory when he was dead? Ah! he was dying, and from the grave there would be no return—no hand could be stretched out from thence to claim her—no voice make itself heard to appeal to her old love for him, to remind her of happy bygone days when she had believed in him, and to bid her to be faithful to him still. Those others would be able to work their will then, while he lay silent for evermore, and his little one would too surely learn what manner of father she had had, perhaps—who knows?—learn to rejoice in the day that had set her free from his influence.

Graham very likely understood something of what was passing in M. Linders' mind, revealed, as it had been, by those few broken words, for he said in a kind voice:

"I think you may surely trust to your child's love for you, M. Linders, for she seems to have found all her happiness in it hitherto, and it is so strong and true that I do not think it will be easily shaken, nor can I fancy any one will be cruel enough to attempt it." And then, seeing how little capable M. Linders seemed at that moment of judging wisely, he went on to urge the necessity of Madelon's being sent to her aunt as her natural guardian, representing the impossibility of leaving her without money or friends in the midst of strangers.

"There is a little money," said M. Linders, "a few

thousand francs—I do not know how much exactly; you will find it in that desk. It would start her for the stage; she has talent—she would rise. S—— heard her sing once; if he were here now, we might arrange—"

He was rambling off in a low broken voice, hardly conscious, perhaps, of what he was saying. Graham once more interposed.

"No, no," he said, "you must not think of it. Let her go to her aunt. Don't be uneasy about her getting there safely; I will take charge of her."

"You will?" said M. Linders, fixing his dim eyes on Graham, and with some resumption of his old manner. "Pardon, Monsieur, but who are you, that you take such an interest in my affairs?"

"Any one must take an interest in your little girl," said Graham warmly, and in the kind, frank voice that somehow always carried with it the conviction of his sincerity and good faith, "and I am truly glad that the chance that brought me to this hotel has put it in my power to be of use to you and to her. For the rest, my name is Graham, and I am an army surgeon. I don't suppose you recollect the circumstance, Monsieur, but I very well remember meeting you at Chaudfontaine some years ago."

"No, I don't remember," said M. Linders faintly, "but I think I may trust you. You will see that Madelon reaches Liége safely?"

"I will take her there myself," answered Graham. "Would you like to send any message to your sister?"

"I will write," said M. Linders, "or rather you shall write for me; but presently—I cannot talk any more now—it must do presently."

Indeed he was faint from exhaustion, and Graham could only do all that was possible to revive him, and then remain by his side till he should have recovered his strength a little; and as he sat there, silently watching, I daresay he preached a little sermon to himself, but in no unfriendly spirit to his patient, we may be sure. This, then, was what life might come to—this might be the end of all its glorious possibilities, of all its boundless hopes and aims. To this man, as to another, had the great problem been presented,

and he had solved it—thus ; and to Graham, in the fulness of his youth, and strength, and energy, the solution seemed stranger than the problem. To most of us, perhaps, as years go on, life comes to be represented by its failures rather than its successes, by its regrets rather than its hopes enthusiasms die out, illusions vanish, belief in the perfectibility of ourselves and of others fades, as we learn to realize the shortness of life, the waywardness of human nature, the baffling power of circumstances, too easily allowed ; but in their place, a humble faith in a more perfect and satisfying hereafter, which shall be the complement of our existence here, the fulfilment of our unfinished efforts, our many shortcomings, springs up, let us trust, to encourage us to new strivings, to ever-fresh beginnings, which shall perhaps be completed and bear fruit in another world, perhaps be left on earth to work into the grand economy of progress—not wholly useless in any case. But at four or five and twenty, in spite of some failures and disappointments, the treasure of existence to an honest, frank heart, still seems inexhaustible as it is inestimable. The contrast between the future Graham looked forward to, full of hopes and ambitions, and this past whose history he could guess at, and whose results he contemplated, forced itself upon him, and an immense compassion filled the young man's heart at the sight of this wasted life, of this wayward mind, lighted up with the sudden, passionate gleams of tenderness for his child, the one pure affection perhaps that survived to witness to what had been—a great compassion, an honest, wondering pity for this man who had thus recklessly squandered his share of the common birth-right. Ah! which of us, standing on safe shores, and seeing, as all must see at times, the sad wreck of some shattered life cast up by the troubled waves at our feet, does not ask himself, in no supercilious spirit, surely, but with an awe-struck humility, "Who or what hath made thee to differ?"

Perhaps, as M. Linders lay there, he also preached to himself a little sermon, after his own peculiar fashion, for when, at the end of half an hour, he once more aroused himself, all signs of agitation had disappeared, and it was with a perfect calmness that he continued the conversation.

Graham could not but admire this composure in the man whom but just now he had seen shaken with passion and exhausted with conflicting emotions; whom indeed he had had to help, and judge for, and support in his hour of weakness and suffering; while now M. Linders had resumed his air of calm superiority as the man of the world, which seemed at once to repel and to forbid support and sympathy from the youth and inexperience at his side.

"You are right, Monsieur," he said, breaking the silence abruptly, and speaking in a clear, though feeble voice, "Madelon must go to her aunt. Did I understand you to say you would take charge of her to Liége?"

"I will certainly," said Graham; "if—"

"I am exceedingly indebted to you," said M. Linders, "but I am afraid such a journey may interfere with your own plans."

"Not in the least," replied Graham. "I am only travelling for amusement, and have no one to consult but myself."

"Ah—well, I shall not interfere with your amusement long; and in the meantime, believe me, I am sensible of your goodness. It may make matters easier if you take a letter from me to my sister. I am afraid I cannot write myself, but I could dictate—if it be not troubling you too much—there is a pen and ink somewhere there; and if you could give me anything—I still feel rather faint."

Graham rose, gave him another cordial, drew a small table to the bedside, and sat down to write. M. Linders considered for a moment, and then began to dictate:

"MA SŒUR,—We parted five and twenty years ago, with a mutual determination never to see each other again—a resolution which has been perfectly well kept, and which there is no danger of our breaking now, as I shall be in my grave before you read this letter; and you will have the further consolation of reflecting that, as we have never met again in this world, neither is there any probability of our doing so in another—"

"Pardon me," said Graham, laying down his pen, as M. Linders dictated these last words, "but you are about to recommend your child to your sister's care; of what use

can it be to begin with words that can only embitter any ill-feeling there may have been between you?"

"But it is a great consolation I am offering her there," says M. Linders, in his feeble voice. "However, as you will—*recommençons;* but no more interruptions, Monsieur, for my strength is not inexhaustible."

"MA SŒUR,—It is now five and twenty years since we parted, with the determination never to see each other again. Whether we have done well to keep to this resolution or not, matters little now; we shall, at any rate, have no temptation in the future to break it, for I shall be in my grave before you receive this letter. I am dying, a fact which may possess some faint interest for you even now—or may not—that is not to the purpose either. It is not of myself that I would speak, but of my child. I am sending her to you, Thérèse, as to the only relative she has in the world; look on her, if you prefer it, as your mother's only grandchild; we had a mother once who loved me, and whom you professed to love—for her sake be kind to Madelon. I am not rich, and without money I cannot leave her among strangers, otherwise I would have found some other means of providing for her; at the same time, I do not send her to you absolutely penniless—she will take to you the sum of three thousand francs, which will provide her board for the next two or three years, at any rate; I do not cast her on your charity. I have two requests to make, and if your religion teaches you to have any regard for the wishes of a dying man, I trust you will hold them sacred as such. In the first place, I demand of you that you should not bring her up to be a nun; she has not, and never will have, the slightest vocation—is not that the right word?—for such a life. My wish is that she should be educated for the stage, but I do not absolutely desire it; circumstances must in some measure decide, and something must be left to your discretion, but a nun she shall not be. In the second place, respect my memory, so far as my little Madeleine is concerned. Keep your powers of abusing me, if they be not already exhausted, for the benefit of others; she has never been separated from me since she was an infant, and the little fool has actually learnt to love me, and to believe in me. It is an innocent delusion, and has made her happy—do not disturb it. I tell you, my sister, it will be the worst work you have yet wrought upon earth, and an evil day for you, if, even when I am in my grave, you try to come between me and my daughter.

"Your brother,

"ADOLPHE LINDERS."

"I will sign it," said the sick man, holding out his hand for the pen. He had dictated the letter with some pauses and gasps for breath, but in the uniform indifferent voice that he had adopted since the beginning of the conversati-

He dropped the pen, when he had scrawled the signature with almost powerless fingers, and his hand fell heavily on the bed again. "That is done," he said, and, after a pause, continued, "Monsieur, circumstances have compelled me to place a confidence in you, with which, at another time, I should have hesitated to burden you, fearing to cause you inconvenience."

"You cause me no inconvenience, and I shall do my best to carry out your wishes," said Horace. "In return, I must beg of you to keep yourself quiet now."

"One moment, Monsieur—my money you will find in that desk, as I have said; after paying my funeral and other expenses, you will, I think, find there is still the sum left that I have named in my letter. I must beg of you to hand it over to my sister. I can trust her so far, I believe; and I will not have my child a pauper on her hands, dependent on her charity for food and clothing; otherwise it might have been wiser—however, it is too late now, and in two or three years much may happen. One word more, and I have done. I have no sort of claim on your kindness, Monsieur, but you have proved yourself a friend, and as such I would ask you not to lose sight of Madelon entirely. She will be but a friendless little one when I am gone, and I have not much confidence in her aunt's tender mercies."

"You may depend upon it that I will not," said Graham earnestly, and hardly thinking of the sort of responsibility he was accepting.

"Thank you; then that is all. And now, Monsieur le Docteur, how long do you give me?"

"How long?" said Graham.

"Ah! how long to live?—to-day, to-night, to-morrow? How long, in short?"

Then Graham spoke plainly at last, without further reticence or concealment, so useless in the face of this indifference and levity, real or affected.

"M. Linders," he said, "the chance on which your recovery hangs is so slight, that I do not think it probable, hardly possible, that you can live over to-morrow. Will you not try to understand this?"

There was something so wistful and kind and honest in Graham's expression as he stood there, looking down on his patient, that M. Linders was touched, perhaps, for he held out his hand with a little friendly gesture; but even then he could not, or would not abandon his latest pose of dying *en philosophe.*

"I understand well enough," he answered; "a man does not arrive at my age, *mon ami*, without having faced death more than once. You think, perhaps, it has terrors for me? —not at all; to speak frankly, pain has, but I do not suffer so much now. That is a bad sign, perhaps. Well, never mind, you have done your best for me, I know, and I thank you. Except for that little regret that you know of as regards Legros and—and Madelon, I am content that life should come to an end—it is not too delightful in any case, and those that I cared for most did their best to spoil mine for me. For people who believe in a hereafter, and choose to contemplate a doubtful future, adorned with flames and largely peopled with devils, I can imagine death to have its unpleasant side; but I look upon all such notions as unphilosophical in the extreme. And now, Monsieur, I think I could sleep a little. By-and-by, when Madelon awakes, I should like to see her."

He turned his head away, and presently fell into a light doze. Did he mean, or did he persuade himself that he meant, half of what he said? Graham could not decide; and, in truth, he had uttered his little speech with an air of dignity and resignation that half imposed upon the younger man, and impressed him, in spite of his better judgment. An heroic soul going forth with an unfeigned stoicism to meet its fate? Or an unhappy man, striving to hide a shivering conciousness from himself and others, with an assumption of philosophical skepticism? Ah! who was Graham, that he should judge or weigh the secrets of another man's heart at such an hour as this? He left the bedside, and went back once more to his writing.

A few minutes afterwards, Madame Lavaux knocked softly, and looked into the room. Graham went out into the passage to speak to her, closing the door after him.

"How is he now, the poor Monsieur?" asks Madame.

"He is sleeping now," Graham answered; "there is nothing to be done but to keep him as quiet as possible.

"And will he recover, do you think?"

"Hardly. One must always hope; but he is very ill."

"Ah! well," said the landlady, resigning herself; "but, after all," she added, "it is sad to see a man die like that; and then there is the child. Otherwise the world will be none the worse for wanting him. But what is to become of the little girl?"

"That is all arranged," replied Graham, "she is to go to an aunt, a sister of her father's, who, it appears, is Superior of a convent near Liége. But can you tell me, Madame, had Madame Linders quarrelled with her English relations? When she was dying alone here, had she no friends of her own that she could have sent for to be with her?"

"She would not have them, Monsieur; you see, she was devoted to her husband in spite of all, this poor Madame, and *he* had quarrelled with her relations, I believe; at any rate, she would not send for them. 'Adolphe will come,' she would always say, 'and it would vex him to find any one here,' and so she died alone, for he never arrived till the next morning. However," continues Madame, "it was not of that I came to speak now, it was to know if Monsieur would not wish to have a nurse to-night to attend to the poor gentleman? It is what we must have had if you had not been here, and there is no reason why you should knock yourself up with nursing him."

"It certainly might be better," said Graham considering, "I had thought of it, but—however, you are quite right, Madame, a nurse we will have; where can I get one?"

Madame said he had better apply to the Sœurs de Charité, and gave him an address, adding that if he would like to go himself she could spare half an hour to sit with Monsieur there.

"I will go at once," replied Graham, "while he is sleeping; he is not likely to rouse again just at present; don't let him talk or move if he should awake, but it is not probable that he will."

So it was arranged, and Madame Lavaux established herself with her knitting in the dim, silent room, while Gra-

ham departed on his errand, satisfied that his patient was in safe hands. Not ten minutes had elapsed, however, when a knock came at the door of the sick-room, and a summons —could Madame come at once? Madame cast a look at her charge; he was perfectly still and quiet, sleeping profoundly apparently; there could be no harm in leaving him for a moment. She went, intending to return immediately; but, alas! for human intentions, downstairs she found a commotion that drove M. Linders, M. le Docteur, and everything else out of her head for the time being. Madame la Comtesse *au premier* had lost her diamond ring—her ring, worth six thousand francs, an heirloom, an inestimable treasure; lost it? it had been stolen—she knew it, felt convinced of it; she had left it for five minutes on her dressing-table while she went to speak to some dressmaker or milliner, and on her return it had vanished. Unpardonable carelessness on her part, she admitted, but that did not alter the fact; it had been stolen, and must be found; house, servants, visitors, luggage, all must be searched and ransacked. Where were the gendarmes? let all these people be taken into custody at once, pointing to the group of startled, wondering servants—let every one be taken into custody. Madame Lavaux had enough to do and to think of for the next hour, we may be sure, and though, at the end of that time, Madame la Comtesse found the ring safe in the corner of her pocket, whither it had slipped off her finger, and the disturbance was at an end, not so were the consequences of that disturbance.

For in the meantime a very different scene was being acted out upstairs.

CHAPTER III.

Madelon's Vigil.

FIVE minutes after Madame Lavaux had left the room, Madelon, just awakened from her sound sleep, came creeping gently in. It was almost dark by this time, for it was late in the afternoon, and the Venetian shutters were still closed that had kept out the heat and glare all day; but now she threw them back, and let in the tepid evening-breeze, and the faded light of the dying day; carriages and carts were rattling in the street below, shrill voices came from the opposite houses where lights were appearing here and there; high up in the serene gray-blue sky a few reddened clouds had caught the last gleams of the setting sun.

"Madelon," said M. Linders, roused by the noise she had made in opening the shutters.

A sudden throb of joy came over her as she heard his voice again, and she went swiftly and stood by his bedside.

"Are you better, papa?" she said, putting her two little cool hands into one of his, hot with fever.

"We are alone, are we not?" he answered, looking feebly round. "Come and sit up here by me. Can you jump up? That is right," as she climbed up and nestled close to him, her feet tucked under the sheet; "here, *petite*, let me put my arm round you."

He raised himself with an effort, and passed his arm round her, so that she could lay her head on his shoulder; and then in answer to her question:

"No, I am not better," he said, "and I do not suppose I ever shall be better now. But never mind that," as she raised her head suddenly, and looked at him with wide, frightened eyes, "let us talk a little, Madelon. We have always been happy together, have we not, my child?"

"Ah! yes, papa."

"And later, when you are grown into a woman—as you will be, you know, by-and-by—and you think of the years when you were a little girl, you will like to recall them—will you not, Madelon? You will remember that they were happy?"

"Yes, papa, I have been happy, ah, so happy!" says Madelon, half crying, and nestling closer to him; "but why do you talk so? What do you mean?"

"You will think of all our travels together, what pretty places we have visited, all the fête-days we have spent; and you will remember that, whatever else I may or may not have done, I have always tried to make you happy, and to be a good papa to my little one. Promise me that, Madelon."

"I promise it, papa," she said. "How could I forget? Why should I not remember? Why do you talk to me in this way, papa? Are you very ill?"

"Very ill," he replied, holding her tighter to him, "so ill that all those happy days are come to an end for me, and for you, too, *ma petite;* we shall never go about again together. You—you—" his voice broke with a sort of groan, but he went on again directly, "I wonder what my little Madelon will be like when she grows into a great girl? I should have liked to have seen you, my little one. I wonder if you will be tall—I daresay you will—for your mother was tall, and your face is very like hers."

"Am I like her, papa?"

"Very," he said, stroking her wavy hair, with his feeble fingers; "your eyes—yes, you have eyes that resemble hers exactly, and sometimes I have thought that when you grew up it would be almost like seeing her over again—for you know I did love her," he added in a lower voice, turning his head restlessly on the pillow, "though they said I did not. I never meant her to die alone; they might have known that. I wish— Bah! I am forgetting—"

"What did you say, papa?"

"Nothing," he answered; "I think I was forgetting where I was. How dark it is growing!—you must light the candles soon. I must look at you again; you know I want

to see your eyes, and smile, and pretty hair once more. And you, my little one, you will not forget my face? Don't cry, don't cry," he said, with a sudden pain in his voice; "I cannot bear it. I have never made you cry before, have I, my child?"

"Never, never!" she said, stifling her tears desperately.

"You must think of me sometimes when you are grown up," he went on in his feeble voice, harping still on the same subject. "You will have no money, my poor little one—if it had not been for that devil Legros—but it is too late to think of that now. Well, I think you will have beauty, and that will go far even if you have no *dot*, and I should like you to marry well. But when you have a husband, and are rich, perhaps, you must still think sometimes of the days when you were a little girl, and had a papa who loved no one in the world so much as his little Madelon."

"Papa, I want no money, nor husband, nor anything else," cried Madelon, in a burst of tears, and throwing both her arms round his neck. "I want nobody but you, and I love you, and always shall love you better than any one else in the world. Papa, are you going to die and leave me?"

"So it seems," he said bitterly. "It is not my choice, Madelon, but one cannot arrange these little matters for oneself, you see. Now listen, my child; I am not going to leave you quite alone. I have a sister, who is your Aunt Thérèse; I have never spoken to you about her before, for she became a nun, and we have not always been very good friends, but I think she will give you a home. She is the Superior of a convent near Liége, and that English gentleman—the doctor, you know—will take you to her; do you understand?"

"Yes, papa."

"Well, you must stay with her for the present. It is not just what I could have wished for you, *ma petite*, but I have no choice, as it happens; and if ever you are dull or unhappy there, you will not blame me, or think I was unkind in sending you, will you, my child? for indeed I could not help it, and you will be a good little girl, I know. By-and by, as I said, perhaps you will marry—I cannot arrange all these matters beforehand. I used to think sometimes that

perhaps you might have come out on the stage a few years hence. Would you have liked that, Madelon?"

"Yes—no—oh, I don't know, papa—I want you—I want you!"

"Yes—you will want me, *pauvre petite.* Good Heavens! that a child so small, so young, should be left without me to take care of her! Bah, I must not think of it. Madelon, there is one thing more you must promise me—never to become a nun."

"A nun, papa?"

"Yes, a nun," he repeated, in his feeble vehement way, "a nun like your Aunt Thérèse. Do you know what it means? To grow pious, and narrow-minded, and sour, to live forever shut up between four walls from which there is no escape, to think yourself better than all the world. Madelon, promise me never to become a nun; if I thought that were the future in store for you—promise me, I say."

"I promise, papa," she said, quite solemnly, putting her hands together with a quaint little gesture; "indeed I should not like it at all."

"If I could only foresee—if I could only arrange," he said piteously. "God knows I have done what I think is best for you, my child, and yet—who knows what may come of it? Madelon," he went on in a faint, pleading, broken voice, "you will not let them make you think ill of me, and blame and despise me when I am dead? They will try perhaps, but you must always love me, my darling, as you do now; it must not be all in vain—all that I have been striving for—ah, don't cry—there—we won't talk any more now—another time."

There was a minute's silence in the darkening twilight; Madelon's face was hidden in her father's shoulder, as he lay there with his arm still round her and his eyes closed, faint and exhausted. All of a sudden he roused himself with a start.

"Ah, I am dying!" he cried, with a hoarse voice, "and it is all dark! Light the candles, Madelon—light them quickly, I must see you once more before I die!"

Startled, awe-struck, only half realizing the meaning of his words, Madelon slid off the bed and prepared to obey.

At that moment there came a tremendous knocking at the door of the room, and a voice half chanting, half shouting—

"Are you here, my friend? Are you within to-night? Can one enter? Open quick; it is I, it is your friend! Are you ready for your little revenge? I am ready, for my part; I will give it to you—yes, with pleasure—yes, with an open heart!"

"It is Legros!" cried M. Linders from his bed, in a sudden spasm of rage, "it is that villain, that *misérable!* Yes, yes, come in; Madelon, light the candles quickly, where are the cards? Ah—I will have my revenge yet!"

The door burst open, and Legros entered, just as Madelon had succeeded in lighting the candles. He stopped short in his uproarious entrance, suddenly sobered by the appearance of M. Linders, as he lay propped up with pillows, his white face and bandaged head, and eyes gleaming with fever and rage.

"Papa is very ill," says Madelon. "Monsieur, do not stay to-night, I beg of you!"

"What are you saying, Madelon?" cried her father; "I forbid you to say that again; bring me the cards. Legros, I am ready for you; ah, there is then one more chance in life!"

"You are not fit to play Monsieur," said the young man, stepping back; "I will come again to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" answered M. Linders, with a sort of laugh, "have you then so many to-morrows that you can talk of them so recklessly? Well, then, I will tell you—I have not—not one; but I have to-night, and that I will not lose. Ah! you think to cheat me in that way? you will put me off till to-morrow? you will say then—Ah, this M. Linders can never have his revenge now, he is quiet enough, I can keep his money in my pocket? You shall not say that, Monsieur; Madelon, bring the cards and the lights close to me here, I cannot see well, it is so dark."

He seized the cards, and began to deal them out on the coverlet with his trembling hands. Madelon placed a small table at his side, put one candle on it, and with the other in her hand stood close to his pillow white and motionless. Legros slowly and reluctantly drew a chair to the bedside,

and sat down opposite. There was a moment's pause, while M. Linders shifted and sorted his cards, and then, "A vous, Monsieur," he cried, with a sort of fierce impatience; but at the same instant his hold relaxed, the cards tumbled all in a heap on to the floor, his head fell back. Madelon screamed and started forward, upsetting the table and the candle; Legros sprang up. It was at that moment that the door opened, and Graham, followed by a Sœur de Charité, entered the room.

Never, to the last day of his life, one may fancy, would Graham forget the little scene before him, which, indeed, always returned to his memory with an impression as vivid as that made upon him now—the overturned table, the scattered cards, Madelon in her white frock, her pale, scared face, her wavy hair, her great brown eyes illuminated by the candle she still held, the terrified Legros, the ghastly look of the dying man—he saw it all at a glance, as he entered the room he had left so dim and silent but half an hour ago. It was to Legros he first addressed himself in a tone of strong indignation.

"Monsieur," he said, "you can have no business to transact with a dying man, and your presence is not desired here. Might I request you to leave me alone with my patient?"

"On my honor, Monsieur," cries the other, pale and stammering; "it was no doing of mine—he would have it so."

Graham, very likely, did not hear what he said; he was already at M. Linders' side. He raised his head, he felt his pulse and heart.

"It is nearly over," he said to the Sœur de Charité; "will you take the little girl into the next room?" And Madelon, frightened and trembling, offered no resistance as the Sœur took her by the hand and led her away.

It was as Graham said; all was nearly over. The feeble life, that with careful tending and cherishing might have flickered and lingered on yet a little longer, was all but quenched in this last supreme passion and effort. M. Linders never spoke again, and died in less than two hours, quietly at last, as men do for the most part die, it is said.

"That poor child!" said Graham, "who will tell her?"

"I will," said the brave, cheery little Sœur Angélique. and went.

* * * * * * * *

It was nearly midnight when the sad little bustle that had been going on in the chamber of death was hushed at last, and the Sœur de Charité prepared to depart. She had offered indeed to stay all night, but when Graham assured her that there was no occasion for any one to remain, as his room was just opposite, and he should be on the watch to see that all was quiet, she owned that she should be glad to go, as there was much illness about, and her services might be required elsewhere. She stood talking to Graham for a few moments before leaving.

"That poor little one," she said, "I should like to have one look at her, just to see that she is quiet; I don't think she half understood, or took in, what I said to her."

"Madame Lavaux told me she was in bed," Graham answered, "but we will see if she is asleep. Poor child, she will understand it all soon enough."

He opened the door gently between the two rooms, and they looked in. All was dark and silent, but they could just distinguish a little head laid on the white pillow, and could hear Madelon's soft, regular breathing.

"That is all right," said Graham, "we will not go in and disturb her; she will sleep till the morning, I daresay, for she was up almost all last night." He closed the door again as he spoke, and so they left her.

It was true that Madelon was asleep, but she was not exactly in bed. When the Sister had come in to tell her of her father's death, she had found her seated on the ground close to the door, with her hands clasped round her knees, her head leaning against the doorway; some one had brought in some supper on a tray, but it stood on the table untouched, though she had eaten nothing since the morning. She did not move when Sœur Angélique came in, but she looked up with an expression of dumb, helpless misery that went to the Sister's heart; she sat down beside her on the floor, put her arm round her, and told her the sad news in her gentle, quiet tones, which had acquired a ring of sym

pathy and tenderness in a thousand mournful scenes of sorrow and despair; but, as she had said to Horace, she hardly knew whether the child understood her, or took in what she was saying. Madelon did not speak nor cry; she only sat gazing at the little Sister with a look of perplexed terror dilating her brown eyes, that never changed as Sœur Angélique went on with her pious, gentle maxims and consolations, which fell blankly enough we may be sure on our small Madelon's bewildered mind; and presently, hearing herself called, and seeing indeed that she was making no impression with her kind little speeches, the Sister rose to go, saying as she did so, "You will go to bed now, *chère petite*, will you not?" and then thinking that a familiar face and voice might perhaps have a kindlier influence than her own just then, she added, "and I will ask Madame Lavaux to come to you."

"No, no," cried Madelon, suddenly rousing, and starting up at these last words. She had comprehended what the Sister had told her well enough so far as words went, but she was too stunned and confused to take in their full meaning; and in truth her presence there at all had only been another unfamiliar element in this bewildering whirl of events, imparting an additional sense of unreality. But when she mentioned Madame Lavaux, the name linked itself at once with recent memories and emotions, and its accustomed association with her every-day life made it a rallying point, as it were, for her scattered ideas. Madame Lavaux had been cross and unkind to her the night before; Madame had buoyed her up with false hopes of her father's recovery only that morning; Madelon did not want her, would not see her. She stood still for a few minutes after the Sœur de Charité had left the room, all her sorrows and doubts and certainties resolved for the moment into a dull, unreasoning dread of seeing Madame Lavaux come in; and then, suddenly fancying she heard footsteps approaching the door, she hastily blew out her candle, and all dressed as was, crept under the coverlet of the bed. She would pretend to be asleep, she thought, and then no one would disturb her. The footsteps passed on, but presently the door did open, and some one looked in: it was Madame

Lavaux, who, seeing that Madelon made no sign, concluded that she was asleep, and went away softly, with a kind pity in her heart for the desolate child. As for Madelon, the pretence of slumber soon passed into reality, for, after lying awake for awhile listening to the low voices and rustling movements in the next room, fatigue and her own enforced tranquillity overcame her, and she fell sound asleep.

It must have been long past midnight when she awoke again with a sudden feeling of fright and strangeness, for which she could not account, but which made her spring off the bed and listen if she could hear any one moving. All was very still; not a sound came from the adjoining apartment; her own room was quite dark, for the windows and outside shutters were closed. Madelon felt scared, lonely, desolate, without knowing why; and then, all at once, she remembered the reason. All that the Sister had said came back with fresh meaning and distinctness to her senses restored by sleep; and, sitting down on the floor just where she was, she began to cry with a low moaning, sobbing sound, as a child cries when it is sorry and not naughty.

No one heard her, no one came near her; she was all alone, and in a few minutes she stopped crying, half frightened at her own voice in the silence and darkness. And then she began to wonder if her father were still in the next room, or whether they had taken him away anywhere; if not, he was all alone in there, as she was in here. It would be some comfort to be with him, she thought. Madelon knew that he was dead, but death was an unfamiliar experience with her; and she could not perhaps clearly separate this hour from all other hours when she had been hurt, or sorrowful, or frightened, and had run to her father to be comforted.

She got up, and, opening the door, stole softly into the other room. It was not quite so dark in there: the windows and Venetian shutters were wide open, and a lamp in the street below gave an uncertain light, by which she could just distinguish the gleam of the mirror, the table in the centre of the room, and the bed, where the outline of a silent form was vaguely defined under the white covering sheet. Madelon had had some half-formed idea of getting on to the

bed, and nestling down by her father, as she had done only the evening before, when he had put his arm around her and they had talked together; but now a chill dread crept over her—a sense of change, of separation; she had not even the courage to raise the sheet and look upon his face. She stood gazing for a moment, afraid to go back into the darkness of her own room; and then, with a sudden movement, as though urged by some terror, she turned quickly away, and went swiftly to the open window. She looked down into the narrow, dark street, dimly illuminated by an occasional lamp; she looked up to the starlit space of sky visible above the house-roofs and chimneys, and neither above nor below did she find any comfort; for a sudden awful realization of death had come to her in the darkness and silence, almost too keen and terrible for our poor little Madelon to bear—each realization, too, a fresh shock, as with an instinctive shrinking from this new consciousness of an intolerable weight her mind slipped away into some more familiar channel, only to be brought rudely back to this fact, so unfamiliar, and yet the only one for her now, in this sudden shattering of all her small world of hopes and joys and affections. And is it not, in truth, terrible, this *strength* of facts, when we are, as it were, brought face to face with them, and held there till we recognize them? No means of evasion, no hope of appeal from what is, in its very nature, fixed, unalterable, irrevocable; the sin is committed, the loved one gone, the friendship broken and dead, and for us remains the realization in remorse, and heart-breaking, and despair.

Which of us is strong enough to wrestle with facts such as these? which one of us can look them long in the face and live? In the desperate recoil, some of us find ourselves recklessly striving to forget and ignore them, and some find a surer refuge in facts that are stronger still than they; but to one and all, in kindly compassion to human weakness, each new emotion, each passing interest and trivial incident, combines to interpose a barrier between us and the terrible moment that overwhelmed us; and time which, in later years, seems to drag out the slow hours and days into long ages of dreary grief, can deal swiftly and mercifully with a little child. Hardly had Madelon grasped the true measure

of her grievous loss, or tasted its full bitterness, when the reaction came with a great burst of tears, and crouching down in the corner by the window where she had spent so many hours of the previous day, she sobbed away half the terror and awe that were oppressing her poor little heart. Presently she began to grow sorry for herself in a vague, half-conscious sort of way—poor little Madelon, sitting there all alone crying, no one to help her, no one to comfort her—then the sobs came at longer and longer intervals as she gradually lost consciousness of where she was, or why she was there; and with the tears still wet on her cheek, she was nearly asleep again, when she was roused by some one bringing a light into the room; it was Graham, who had come to fetch something he had left on the table, and to see that all was quiet.

Madelon was too much accustomed to late expectant vigils to be startled; and, indeed, in her drowsy state, her first impression was only the familiar one of a welcome arrival. "Me voici, papa!" she cried, jumping up promptly; and then she saw the young man coming towards her, and with a suddenly revived consciousness of the still, white-sheeted form on the bed, she sank down on her low seat again, the sensation of blank misery all revived.

Graham, on his side, was not a little surprised at the small figure that had started up to meet him; he had fancied her in bed hours ago. He came up to where she was sitting, a most sad, disconsolate little Madelon, all huddled together, her hands clasped round her knees, her eyes shining through a short wavy tangle of brown hair, all rough and disordered.

"Don't you think you would be better in bed?" says Horace, in his kind, cheery voice.

"No," she answered abruptly; she was so miserable, so sore at heart with the sudden disappointment, poor child, and Graham had been the cause of it.

"But I am afraid you will be ill to-morrow if you sit there all night," said Graham; "do you know what time it is?"

"No," she said again; and then, as he came a step nearer, she gave a stamp on the floor, and turned her back

on him. "Ah, do leave me alone!" she cried, in a miserable little broken voice, covering her face with her hand.

Graham saw that she was utterly wretched and worn out. He could guess pretty well how it had all happened, and reproached himself for not having foreseen and provided against the chance of her waking up and finding herself alone; and now he hardly knew what to do—to speak to her, or to urge her any more just then, would only make matters worse. At last he said quietly:

"I have some writing to do, and I am going to bring it in here; you will not mind that, I daresay?"

No answer; Horace left the room, but in a moment he returned, sat down at the table and began to write.

A stillness which the rapid scratching of the pen upon the paper, and the vague, ceaseless hum of the great city coming through the open window, only seemed to render apparent; occasionally the clang of a church clock, the sudden rattle of wheels rising like hollow thunder and dying away into remote distance, a far-off cry, and then a silence more profound by contrast. Madelon, sitting in her dark corner, began to recover herself; in truth, it was the greatest possible relief to have Graham in the room with her, bringing light and the warm sense of a living presence into the chill, unnatural silence and darkness of death; and presently she began to awake to a half-penitent consciousness that she had been cross, rude, not at all *raisonnable* in fact; little by little she shifted her position, and at length turned quite round to look at M. le Docteur.

Monsieur le Docteur was not looking at her, nor thinking of her apparently, for he never raised his eyes from his writing; the candle-light shone on his rough brown hair, on his pleasant, clever face, with keen profile, well defined against a shadowy background. Madelon sat watching him as though fascinated; there was something in the absorbed attention he was giving to his writing, which subdued and attracted her far more than any words he could have spoken to her, or notice he could have taken of her just then. He had apparently forgotten her, this kind Monsieur le Docteur, who had evidently more important things to think about than her and her pettish little speeches; or she had per

haps made him angry, and he would not take any more notice of her at all? There was a certain amount of probability in this last idea to the self-convicted little Madelon that urged her to some sort of action; she sat still for a few moments longer, then got up and stole softly across the room to where Graham was sitting.

"I did not mean to be cross, Monsieur," she said, in her little trembling voice, standing with her hands clasped behind her back, and tears in her eyes. Perhaps Graham *had* forgotten her for the moment, for he gave a little start as he looked round.

"I am sure you did not," he said quite earnestly, as he laid down his pen, "but you are so tired to-night, and unhappy too; are you not?"

"Ah, yes," she answered, with a little sob, "I am very unhappy!"

He put his arm round her, as she stood beside him, and took one of her little hands in his; he was so sorry for the poor little girl, and yet he hardly knew what to say to console her. She gave two or three more little sobs, rubbing her eyes with her other hand to keep back the tears; presently she looked up into his face, and said:

"Do you really think I had better go to bed?"

"Indeed I do," replied Horace, much relieved by the practical turn her thoughts were taking; "I am really afraid you will be ill to-morrow if you do not, and you know I must take care of you now."

"I thought papa was all alone in here, and I was alone too," said Madelon, "it was so dark and lonely in my room."

"Well," said Horace, "I am going to stay in here for a little while, and presently I will open your door, and then it will be almost as if you were in the same room; won't that do?"

"Yes, thank you," said Madelon, who indeed was so tired that she could hardly speak. Graham lighted a candle for her, and opened the door leading into the inner room; she paused a moment as she took the light; and gazed up into the kind face looking down upon her; then she put her hand into his saying, "Good-night, Monsieur,"

went into her own room. Graham closed the door, and returned to his writing. That was all that passed between them, but from that time Madelon's feeling for Horace Graham approached adoration.

CHAPTER IV.

Madelon's Promise.

A WEEK later, and Madelon was again, as on the day of her father's death, standing at a long open window, looking out on the fading glories of another evening sky. But instead of the narrow Paris street, with its noisy rattle of vehicles, and high white houses limiting the view of earth and heaven, before her lay the small garden of a Liége hotel, and beyond, the steep slope of a hill, where, mingled with trees, roof rose above roof, to where two churches crowning the ridge, showed their gray masses outlined against the clear pale blue.

Madelon had left Paris with Horace Graham the day before, and they had arrived at Liége that afternoon. The young doctor, bent on fulfilling the promise he had made to M. Linders, had altered all his plans, remaining in Paris till his little charge's affairs were settled, and then bringing her to Liége, with the intention of leaving her in her aunt's hands, and then proceeding to Switzerland for the accomplishment of as much of his proposed tour as should still be practicable. He willingly forfeited these days out of his brief holiday, for he had come to regard the child so unexpectedly thrown upon his care, with a very sincere interest, an affection not unmixed with wonder. Madelon was not at all like any other little girl he had ever had anything to do with, or rather—for his experience on this point was limited—unlike his preconceived notions of little girls in general. We, who know what Madelon's education had been, cannot feel surprised at her total ignorance of all sorts of elementary matters, her perfect unconsciousness of the most ordinary modes of thought current in the world, and of the most generally received standards of right and

wrong, combined with a detailed experience in a variety of subjects with which children in general have no acquaintance. But for Graham, there was much that could only be matter for conjecture, much that he could only learn from inference, and to him there was something at once strange and pitiable in the simplicity with which she talked to him of her past life, dwelling on little episodes that only served to exhibit more and more clearly the real character of M. Linders and his associates. Not for the world would he have touched the child's innocent faith, or revealed to our simple Madelon that her father was not the perfection she dreamed him; but he began to understand better the meaning of M. Linders' last words in his letter to his sister, and they gained a pathetic significance and force as he learnt to appreciate the affection that had subsisted between the father and child, and foresaw too plainly that the time must come when some rude shock would shatter all Madelon's early beliefs, and desecrate, as it were, her tenderest memories. There was something so sad in this certain retribution that must fall upon her innocent head, as the child of such a father, something so touching in her anomalous position, left all friendless and lonely in the midst of such a hard, relentless world, that Horace felt all his tenderest feelings stirred with compassion, and he could have wished to have shielded her forever from what, he could not but fear, too surely awaited her sooner or later.

What he could do, he did, and it was more than he thought. Madelon's sudden devotion to him, of which indeed he knew and suspected nothing, was of infinite service to her in the first bitterness of her grief, by giving a new current to her ideas, while it did away with the sense of lonely desolation that had nearly overpowered her in that first dark hour. In her ardent little nature there was a necessity for loving, even stronger perhaps than for being loved, a certain enthusiasm, a capacity for devotion that had opportunely found an object in the time of extreme need. For a short hour it had seemed to her as if life itself had come to an end with her father's death; the darkness and vagueness of the future had crushed her down, all the more that she had scarcely comprehended what was the weight that so op-

pressed her—and then a moment had changed it all; a kind word spoken, a kind face looking down upon her, a friendly hand stretched out, and the vague terrors had vanished. From that time Horace Graham's presence was bliss to our Madelon; when she was unhappy, she dried her tears if he consoled her; if he was out, she sat listening for his returning footsteps; if he was busy, she was content to remain for hours with her book on her knee, her chin propped on her hands, her wistful eyes following his every movement. Monsieur Horace, as it pleased Madelon to call him, knew nothing of all this, we may be sure; but he was very good and tender to the little girl, and did all he could to cheer and console her in the sudden overpowering fits of grief that came upon her from time to time. Finding that she liked to talk of the past, he encouraged her to do so, being anxious, indeed, to learn all he could of her former life, and to ascertain if, after all, there were indeed no friends to whom he could apply, in the event of his mission to her Aunt Thérèse proving, from any cause, unsuccessful. But, as before, on this point he obtained no sort of satisfaction. Madelon never got much beyond the Florence artists, and her German countess, and Russian princess. M. Linders, it was evident, had had no friends beyond the acquaintance he had made at the different places at which he had been wont to tarry from time to time; and these, for the most part, Graham inferred to have been of so doubtful a character that he could only rejoice for Madelon's sake that all further chance of connection was broken off. Madelon dwelt at great length on their last winter at Florence; she loved Italy, she said; she liked it better than France or Belgium, and Florence was such a beautiful place; had Monsieur Horace ever been there? There were such splendid churches, and palaces and galleries, with such grand pictures and statues; the American used to take her to see them. Papa had several friends there who knew a great deal about pictures, who were artists indeed; she used to go to their studios sometimes, and she liked hearing them talk. And then there were the fêtes and processions, and the country people in such gay dresses, and all with such a blue sky and such bright sunshine; and then the Sundays!

very often she and papa would go out into the country to some inn where they would breakfast and dine; ah! it had been so pleasant. "I shall never be so happy again," sighs Madelon.

The warm, glowing, picturesque Italian life had, as we know, forcibly seized her imagination, her eyes shone with delight as she recalled it, and, almost involuntarily in describing it, she made use of the soft words and phrases of the Italian tongue, which, with the ready talent she possessed for languages, she had caught up, and spoke fluently.

"Where did you go when you left Florence?" asked Graham.

"We came north across the Alps and through Switzerland to Baden, and then we stayed a little while at Homburg, and then we were at Wiesbaden for six weeks: do you know Wiesbaden, Monsieur Horace?"

"I was there once for two days," answered Graham; "were you happy there too?"

"Ah! yes, I was always happy with papa, but I like Wiesbaden very much. It is so pretty and gay; do you remember the Kursaal gardens? I used to walk there and listen to the band, and sometimes we sat and had coffee at the little round tables, and looked at all the people passing. And then in the evening there were the balls; last summer I used sometimes to go to them with the Russian Princess."

"And who was the Russian Princess?" Graham asked.

"She was a Russian lady papa knew there, and she was very kind to me; I used to walk with her, and sit by her at the tables, and prick her cards for her; she said I brought her luck."

"Prick her cards!" cried Graham.

"Yes—don't you know? at rouge-et-noir," says Madelon in explanation, "one has little cards to prick, and then one remembers how many times each color has won; otherwise one would not know at all what to do."

"I see," said Graham; "and so your Russian Princess played at rouge-et-noir—did she win much?"

"Yes, a great deal," cried Madelon, spreading out her hands, "she always had *chance*, and was very rich; she wore such beautiful toilettes at the balls; she knew a great ma-

gentlemen, and when I went with her they all danced with me."

And so on, *da capo;* it was always the same story, and Graham soon found that he had reached the limits of Madelon's experiences in that direction. As a last resource, he wrote to her American and German friends at Florence, the most respectable apparently of M. Linders' many doubtful acquaintance, and indeed the only ones with whose address Madelon could furnish him. From the old German he received a prompt reply. The American was absent from Florence, he said, on a visit to his own country, which was to be regretted, as it was he who had been M. Linders' friend, and who could have given more information concerning him than it was in his power to do. Indeed, for himself, he knew little about him; he had spent the last winter at Florence, but his society and associates were not such as he, the German, affected. M. Linders had once been an artist, he believed; he had spent much of his time in painting, but he knew nothing of his early life. That he was a notorious gambler he was well aware, and had heard more than one story about him that certainly placed his character in no very favorable light; more than this he could not say. Of Madelon he spoke with the warmest affection, and there was a little note enclosed to her in Graham's letter, which she placed and carefully preserved, we may be sure, among her most precious treasures.

These letters written, and M. Linders' few papers, which were of little interest or importance, examined, Graham had exhausted his sources of possible information, and could only trust no obstacle would intervene to prevent his little charge being at once received at the convent, and placed under her aunt's guardianship and care. So, with as little delay as possible, they had packed up, and set off on their journey: and now, as Madelon stands at the window of the little hotel salon, Paris lies many a league behind them, beyond the great northern levels, across which they had been speeding for so many hours. And behind her, too, already separated from her by a distance more impassable than that which can be counted by leagues, lies Madelon's old life, to which many and many a time, with passionate

outcries, perhaps, with tender unspeakable yearnings, she will look back across an ever-widening space, only to see it recede more hopelessly into a remoter past.

She does not understand all this yet, however, with the new life still scarcely a week old. She is thinking of Monsieur Horace, as she stands there looking out at the sunset sky; they have just dined, and behind her a deft waiter is removing the cloth; and in a minute she turns round gladly, as Monsieur Horace himself comes into the room.

"Shall we take a walk, Madelon?" he says, "or are you too tired?"

"I am not at all tired," Madelon answered. "I should like to have a walk; may we go and look at the convent where Aunt Thérèse lives? I should like to see it."

"That is a good idea," said Horace. "I will inquire whereabouts it is, and we will go and have a look at it."

The convent, they were told, stood on the outskirts of Liége, about a quarter of a mile outside the town, and a little off the great high-road leading through Chaudfontaine and its adjacent villages to Pepinster and Spa. It was at some distance from the hotel; but Madelon repeated that she was not at all tired, and would like a long walk, so they set off together in the mild September evening. To their left lay the old town with its picturesque churches, its quaint old Bishop's palace, its tall chimneys and busy quays, and wharves, and warehouses, stretching along the river banks; but all this they left on one side as they went along the wide, tree-planted boulevards, where carriages were rolling, and lamps lighting, and people walking about in the ruddy glow; and presently these too were passed by, and they came out on the dusty high-road. A few scattered houses were still to their right hand and to their left; but the city, with its cloud of smoke, its kindling lights and ceaseless movement, was behind them now. Of all its restless stir no sound reached them through the soft twilight but the chime of bells from its many towers, which rang out the evening angelus just as they saw, standing on the summit of a gentle slope to their left, a building with steep gray slate roofs and belfry, rising above low white surrounding walls, and knew that they had reached their destination.

The carriage-road up to the convent made a circuit, and swept round to the other side of the little declivity, but in front, separated from the high-road by a hedge, there was only the slope of a ploughed field, with a gate at the lower end, opening on to a narrow path that led straight through it up the hill; and this path Graham and Madelon followed, to where it joined a weed-grown footway skirting the outer wall of the building. There was a garden inside apparently, for trees were waving their topmost branches overhead, and vines, and westeria, and Virgina creeper hung down in long, many-colored tangled shoots and tendrils over the angle of the wall outside. A little beyond was a side-door, with a bench placed beside it; and above, surmounted by a crucifix under a little pent-house, a narrow shelf on which stood an empty bowl and spoon, just placed there probably by some wandering pensioner, who had come there, not in vain, to seek his evening meal.

"Shall we sit down for a minute and rest?" said Graham.

Madelon seated herself at his side, without speaking; she had been talking fast enough, and not without cheerfulness, during the early part of her walk; but since they had come within sight of the convent, her chatter had died away into silence. Perhaps she was tired, for she sat quite still now, and showed no wish to resume the conversation. The sound of the city chimes died away; the little bell in the belfry close by kept up its sharp monotone for a minute longer, and then it too was hushed; the trees whispered and rustled, the grasshoppers chirped shrilly all around, but a great stillness seemed to fall upon the darkling earth as the gray evening came down, and enfolded it in its soft mists. Gray fields stretched away on either hand, gray clouds that had been rosy-red half an hour ago, floated overhead; only the trees looked dark against the tender gray sky, the encircling hills of Liége against the lingering twilight glow.

The silent influence of the hour made itself felt on these two also, perhaps, for neither of them spoke at first; indeed, Graham's thoughts had wandered far beyond the horizon before him, when he was aroused by the sound of

a little sob, and turning round, he saw that Madelon was crying.

"What is it, Madelon?" he said; "are you tired? What is the matter?"

She did not answer at once, she was struggling with her tears; at last out came the grief.

"It—it all looks so sad, and gloomy, and *triste*," she said. "I do not want to come here and be shut up in the convent; oh, take me away, take me away!"

She clung to Graham as if she were to be parted from him that moment, while he soothed her as best he could.

"We will go away at once if you like," he said; "I think we did wrong to come at this time of the evening; everything looks gray and cheerless now—you will see to-morrow how much brighter it will all appear."

"It is not only that," said Madelon, striving to check her sobs; "but just now, when we were sitting here, somehow I had forgotten all about where I was, and everything; and I thought I was out walking with papa, as I used to be, and I was planning what we would do to-morrow—and then all at once I remembered—and to-morrow I shall be in there, and I shall never see him again, and you will be gone too—oh, papa, papa—"

She was shaking all over with one of her sudden bursts of passionate crying. What could he do to console her? What could he say to comfort her? Not much, perhaps, but then much was not needed; only a few words, commonplace enough, I daresay—but then, as we have said, Monsieur Horace's voice and words always had a wonderful influence with our little Madelon. How is it, indeed, that amid a hundred tones that fret and jar on our ears, there is one kind voice that has power to calm and soothe us—amid a hundred alien forms, one hand to which we cling for help and support? Graham did not say much, and yet, as Madelon listened, her sobs grew less violent, her tears ceased, she began to control herself again. "Listen," said Graham, presently, "is not that singing that we hear? I think it must be the nuns."

Madelon raised her head and held her breath to listen; and sure enough, from within the convent came the sour

of the voices of the nuns at their evening prayers. She listened breathlessly, a change came over her face, a light into her eyes, and she tightened her grasp of Graham's hand. The melancholy voices rising and falling in unison, seemed a pathetic, melodious interpretation of the inarticulate harmonies of the evening hour.

"I like that," said Madelon, relaxing her hold as they ceased at last; "do you think they sing like that every evening, Monsieur Horace?"

"I have no doubt of it," he answered, "it is their evening service; see, that must be the chapel where the windows are lighted up."

"Perhaps they will let me sing too," said Madelon. "Ah, I shall like that—I love singing so much; do you think they will?"

"I think it very likely," said Horace; "but now, Madelon, we must be going towards home; it is almost quite dark, and we have a long walk before us."

Madelon was almost cheerful again now. She so readily seized the brighter side of any prospect, that it was only when the dark side was too forcibly presented to her that she would consent to dwell on it; and now the sound of the nuns singing had, unconsciously to herself, idealized the life that had appeared so dull and cheerless when viewed in connection with the gray twilight, and had changed its whole aspect. When they reached the boulevards, where the lamps were all lighted now, and the people still walking up and down, it was she who proposed that they should sit down on one of the benches for a while.

"This is the last walk I shall have with you," she said, "for such a long, long time."

"Not so very long," said Graham, "you know I am to come and see you on my way back from Germany, and then if I can manage it, we will have another walk together."

"That will be very nice," said Madelon; and then, after a pause, she added, "Monsieur Horace, supposing Aunt Thérèse says she will not have me, what shall I do then?"

This very same question had, as we know, presented itself to Graham before now, and he had felt the full force

of the possible difficulty that had now occurred to our unthinking Madelon for the first time.

"Indeed I do not know, Madelon," he answered, half laughing, "but I don't think we need be afraid; your aunt is not likely to turn you away."

"But if she did," persisted Madelon, "what should I do? Would you take me away to live with you?"

"With me?" said Graham, smiling, "I don't think that would quite do, Madelon; you know I am a soldiers' doctor, and have to go where they go, and could not have you following the regiment."

"Then you cannot come and go about as you please," said Madelon; "I thought you always went where you liked; you are not with the regiment now."

"No, I have a holiday just now; but that will come to an end in two or three weeks, and then I must do as I am bid, and go where I am told."

"And you have no home then? Ah, take me with you, Monsieur Horace, I should like to see the world—let me go with you."

"Would you like to put on a little red coat, and shoulder a musket and stand to be shot at?" says Graham, laughing at her. "I hope to see more of the world than you would quite like, I fancy, Madelon, that is, if we have any luck and get ordered out to the Crimea."

For indeed it was just the moment of the Crimean war, and while the events recorded in this little story were going on, the world was all astir with the great game in which kingdoms are staked, and a nation's destinies decided, treaties were being torn, alliances formed, armies marching, all Europe arming or standing at arms to prepare for the mighty struggle, and Graham, like many another young fellow, was watching anxiously to see whether, in the great tide rolling eastward, some wave would not reach to where he stood, and sweep him away to the scene of action.

Madelon had not heard much about the Crimea, and did not very well know what Horace meant; but she understood the first part of his speech, and she, too, laughed at this picture of herself in a little red coat. Presently, however, she recurred to her original question.

"If you were not marching about, would you let me come and live with you?" she asked again.

"Indeed, I do not say that I would," said Graham, laughing, "and I don't mean to settle down for a long time yet; I have to make my fortune, you know."

"To make your fortune!" cries Madelon, pricking up her ears at the sound of the words, for indeed they had a most familiar ring in them; "why, I could do that for you," she added after a moment's pause.

"Could you?" said Graham absently; he did not follow out her thought in the least, and in fact hardly heard what she said, for the words were suggestive to him also, and carried with them their own train of ideas.

"Yes, and I will too," says Madelon, in one brief moment conceiving, weighing, and forming a great resolution. "Ah, I know how to do it—I know, and I will; I promise you, and I always keep my promises, you know. I promised papa that I would never become a nun, and I never will."

"Indeed, I cannot fancy you a nun at all," said Graham, rousing himself and getting up. "Don't you think we had better be going back to the hotel now? It is getting quite late."

"And when your fortune is made, may I come and live with you?" said Madelon, without moving.

"We will see about that afterwards," he answered, smiling, "there is time enough to think about it, you may be sure. Come, Madelon, we must be going."

"Ah, you do not know, and I will not tell you," said Madelon, jumping up as she spoke.

"What do I not know?" asked Graham, taking her hand in his, as they walked off together.

"What I will do—it is my secret, but you will see—yes, you will see, I promise you that."

She almost danced with glee as she walked along at Graham's side. He did not understand what she was talking about; he had missed the first sentence that might have given him the clue, and merely supposed that it was some childish mystery with which she was amusing herself.

But Madelon understood full well, and her busy little

brain was full of plans and projects as she walked along. Make a fortune! how many fortunes had she not seen made in a day—in an hour! "Give me only ten francs, *et je ferai fortune!*" The old speech that she had quoted years ago to Horace Graham—though, indeed, she had no remembrance of having done so—was familiar to her now as then. Ah! she knew how fortunes were made, and Monsieur Horace did not—that was strange, but it was evident to her—and she would not tell him. Her superior knowledge on this point was a hidden treasure, for a great ambition had suddenly fired our ten-year-old Madelon. Not only in maturer years are great plans laid, great campaigns imagined, great victories fought for; within the narrow walls of many a nursery, on the green lawns of many a garden, the mimic fort is raised, the siege-train laid, the fortress stormed; and in many a tiny head the germs of the passions and ambitions and virtues of later years are already working out for themselves such paths as surrounding circumstances will allow them to find. But Madelon's childhood had known neither nursery nor sheltered home-garden. Her earliest experiences had been amidst the larger ventures of life, the deeper interests that gather round advancing years; her play-ground had been the salons of the gayest watering-places in Europe, her play-things the roulette-board and the little gold and silver pieces that had passed so freely backwards and forwards on the long green tables where desperate stakes were ventured, and fortunes won and lost in a night; and it was among these that she now proposed to try her own little game of enterprise, and prepare this grand surprise for Monsieur Horace. The idea was an inspiration to her. Her whole soul was bound up in Horace Graham; I think she would willingly have laid down her life for him, and have thought little of the offering; a sort of *furore* of gratitude and devotion possessed her, and here at length was an opportunity for doing something for him—something he did not know how to do for himself, great and wise though he was, and this idea added not a little zest to the plan, in Madelon's opinion, one may be sure. Ah, yes, she knew what to do, she would go to the gambling-tables, as she had seen her father and his associates go

scores of times; she would win money for him, she would make his fortune!

So Madelon schemed as she walked along by Graham's side, while he, for his part, had already forgotten her little speech, if indeed he had ever heard it.

So it is often—a few careless words between two people, quickly spoken, soon forgotten, by at least one of them—and yet, perhaps, destined to alter the course of two lives. Before they had reached the hotel, Madelon had arranged not only the outline, but the details of her scheme. Spa was, as she well knew, but a short distance from Liége; she would at once beg her aunt to allow her to go over there for a day, or two days, if one were not enough, and then—why, once there, everything would be easy, and perhaps, even before Monsieur Horace came back from Germany, as he had said he would, all might be done, the promise redeemed, the fortune made! A most childish and child-like plan, founded so entirely on deductions drawn from experiences in the past, so wholly without reference to the probabilities of the future, and yet not the less the result of a fixed resolution in Madelon's mind, which no subsequent change in the mere details of carrying it out could affect. For, in her small undeveloped character lay latent an integrity and strength of will, a tenacity of purpose, which were already beginning to work, unconsciously, and by instinct as it were, for she could assuredly never have learnt them from her father, who regarded honesty and integrity as merely inconvenient weaknesses incidental to human nature under certain conditions. But to Madelon they were precisely those sacred truths which lie hidden in our inmost hearts, and which, when once revealed to us, we cling to as our most steadfast law, and which to deny were to denounce our best and purest self. Not to every one are the same truths revealed with the same force; for the most part it is only through a searching experience that we can come clearly to understand one or another, which is to our neighbor as his most unerring instinct; and such must have been this integrity of purpose in Madelon, who, in affirming that she always kept her promises, had uttered no idle vaunt, nor even the proved result of such experience as her short

life had afforded, but had simply given expression to what she instinctively knew to be the strongest truth in her nature.

That evening, after Madelon had gone up to bed, she stood long at her open window looking out into the night. Her bedroom was high up in the hotel, and overlooked a large public place; just opposite was a big, lighted theatre, and from where she stood she could catch the sound of the music, and could fancy the bright interior, the gay dresses, the balcony, the great chandeliers, the actors, the stage. It was her farewell for many a long day to the scenes and pleasures of her past life, but she did not know it. The sound of the music stirred within her a sort of vague excitement, an indefinite longing, and she was busy peopling the future—a child's future, it is true, not extending beyond two or three weeks, but yet sufficient to make her forget the past for the moment. She must have stood there for nearly an hour; any one looking up might have wondered to see the little head popped out of the window, the little figure so still and motionless. Up above the stars twinkled unheeded; down below other stars seemed to be dancing across the wide Place, but they were only the lamps of the carriages as they drove to and fro from the theatre. And yonder, on the outskirts of this busy town, with its lights and crowds and gay bustle, sleeping under the silent, slow-moving constellations, surrounded by the dark rustling trees, stands the still convent, where a narrow room awaits this dreaming, eager little watcher. Our poor little Madelon! Not more difference between this gay, familiar music to which all her life has been set hitherto, and the melancholy chant of the nuns, whose echoes have already passed from her memory, than between the future she is picturing to herself and the one preparing for her—but she does not know it.

CHAPTER V.

Mademoiselle Linders.

IMMEDIATELY after breakfast the next morning Graham once more started for the convent, this time, however, leaving Madelon at the hotel. He had written from Paris to the Superior immediately after her brother's death, but had received no reply. M. Linders' letter he had kept by him to deliver in person when he should have reached Liége.

Madelon was watching for his return, and ran to meet him with a most eager face.

"Have you seen my aunt?" she said. "Am I to go?"

"Yes, you are to go, Madelon," he said, looking down on her, and taking her hands in his. "I have seen your aunt, and we have agreed that it is best I should take you there this afternoon."

He sat down, and gave her some little account of the interview he had had with her father's sister; not the whole, however, for he said nothing of his own feeling of disappointment in the turn that it had taken, nor of the compassion that he felt for his little charge.

The fact of M. Linders having quarrelled with his sister had, on the whole, tended to prejudice the latter in his favor rather than otherwise, for M. Linders unfortunately seemed to have had a talent for quarrelling with every respectable friend and relation that he possessed; and it was with a strong hope of finding a good and kind guardian for Madelon in her aunt, that he had started for the convent. He wrote a few words of explanation on his card, and this, with M. Linders' letter, he sent in to the Lady Superior, and in return was requested to wait in the parlor till she should come to him. A key was handed to him, and he let himself into a large, square room, furnished with a table, a piano,

and some straw chairs; a wooden grating shut off one end, within which were another table and more chairs; one or two prints of sacred subjects were on the walls, two large windows high up showed the tops of green trees in a sunny inner court-yard,—Graham had time to take in all these details before a door on the other side of the grating opened, and the Lady Superior appeared.

Mademoiselle Linders had doubtless displayed a wise judgment in her choice of life; she could never under any circumstances have shone in society, but there was something imposing in her tall figure in its straight black draperies, and the ease and dignity to which she could never have attained in a Paris salon, she had acquired without difficulty in her convent parlor. She had worked hard to obtain her present position, and she filled it with a certain propriety of air and demeanor. But her features were harsh, and her thin, worn face, so far as could be distinguished beneath the half-concealing black veil, wore a stern, discontented expression. Somehow, Graham already felt very sorry for little Madelon, as holding M. Linders' letter in one hand, the Superior approached the grating, and sitting down on the inner side, invited him by action, rather than words, to resume his chair on the other.

"If I am not mistaken, Monsieur," she began in a constrained, formal voice, "it was from you that I received a letter last week, announcing my brother's death?" Graham bowed.

"I thought it unnecessary to answer it," continued the Superior, "as you stated that you proposed coming to Liége almost immediately. If I understand rightly, you attended my brother in his last illness?"

"I did, Madame—it was a short one, as you are aware—"

"Yes, yes, an accident—I understood as much from your letter," says Madame, dismissing that part of the subject with a wave of her hand; "and the little girl?"

"She is here—in Liége, that is—we arrived last night."

"In this letter," says the Superior, slowly unfolding the paper, "with the contents of which you are doubtless acquainted, Monsieur—"

"I wrote it at M. Linders' dictation, Madame."

"Ah, exactly—in this letter then, I see that my brother wishes me to take charge of his child. I confess that, after all that has passed between us, I am at a loss to imagine on what grounds he can found such a request."

"But—pardon me, Madame—" said Graham, "as your brother's only surviving relative—so at least I understood him to say—you surely become the natural guardian of his child."

"My brother and I renounced each other, and parted years ago, Monsieur; were you at all intimate with him?"

"Not in the least," replied Graham; "I knew nothing, or next to nothing, of him, till I attended him in his last illness; it was by the merest accident that I became, in any way, mixed up in his affairs."

"Then you are probably unaware of the character he bore," Thérèse Linders said, suddenly exchanging her air of cold constraint for a voice and manner expressive of the bitterest scorn; "he was a gambler by profession, a man of the most reckless and dissipated life; he plunged by choice into the lowest society he could find; he broke his mother's heart before he was one-and-twenty; he neglected, and all but deserted his wife; he ruined the lives of all who came in his way—he was a man without principle or feeling, without affection for any living being."

"Pardon me, Madame," Graham said again, "he was devotedly attached to his little daughter, and—and he is dead; to the dead much may surely be forgiven," for indeed at that moment his sympathies were rather with the man by whose death-bed he had watched than with the bitter woman before him.

"There is no question of forgiveness here," says Madame the Superior, with a slight change of manner; "I bear my brother no malice; it was not I that he injured, though he would doubtless have done so had it been in his power. In separating myself from him, I felt that I was only doing my duty; but I have kept myself informed as to his career, and had I seen any change or hope of amendment, I might have made some steps towards reconciliation."

"And that step, Madame," Graham ventured to say, "was taken by your brother on his death-bed—"

"Are you alluding to this letter, Monsieur?" she inquired, crushing it in her hand as she spoke, "you have forgotten its contents strangely, if you imagine that I can consider that as a step towards reconciliation. My brother expresses no wish of the kind; he was no hypocrite at least, and he says with sufficient plainness, that he only turns to me as a last resource."

And, in fact, the letter was, as we know, couched in no very pleasant or conciliatory terms, and Graham was silenced for the moment. At last—

"He appeals to your mother's memory on behalf of his child," he said.

"He does well to allude to our mother!" cried the Superior. "Yes, I recognize him there. He does well to speak of her, when he knows that he broke her heart. She adored him, Monsieur. He was her one thought in life, when there were others who—who perhaps—but all that signifies little now. But in appealing to my mother's memory he suggests the strongest reason why, even now that he is dead, I should refuse to be reconciled to his memory."

Graham was confounded by her vehemence. What argument had he to oppose to this torrent of bitter words? Or how reason with such a woman as this—one with a show of right, too, on her side, as he was bound to own? He did not attempt it, but gave up the point at once, turning to a more practical consideration.

"If you are not disposed to take charge of your little niece, Madame," he said, "can you at least suggest any one in whose care she can be left? I promised her father to place her in your hands, but you must see it is impossible for me to take any further responsibility on myself. Even if I had the will, I have not at present the power."

"I never said I would not take charge of my niece, Monsieur," said the Superior.

And to what end then, wonders Graham, this grand tirade, this fine display of what to him could not but appear very like hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness? To what end indeed? And yet, perhaps, not wholly unnatural. After five-and-twenty years of convent life, Thérèse Linders still clung to the memory of the closing scenes of her wor'

career, as the most eventful in the dead level of a gray monotonous life, still held to the remembrance of her mother's death, and of her fierce quarrel with her brother, as the period when all her keenest emotions had been most actively called into play. And indeed what memories are so precious to us, which, in our profound egotism, do we cherish so closely, as those of the times which stirred our strongest passions to their depth, and which, gathering up, as it were, all lesser experiences into one supreme moment, revealed to us the intensest life of which we are capable? There are women who would willingly barter months of placid existence for one such moment, though it be a bitter one; and though Mademoiselle Linders was not one of these, or she would never have discovered that her vocation lay within the walls of a convent, she was, nevertheless, a woman capable of strong feelings, of vehement passions; and these had, perhaps, found their widest scope in the love, though it had been a wayward one, that she had felt for her mother, and in her intense jealousy of her brother. For a quarter of a century these passions had laid dormant, crushed beneath the slow routine of daily duties; but these, in their unvarying monotony, had, on the other hand, made that lapse of years appear but as a few weeks, and kept the memory of those stormy scenes fresher than that of the events that, one by one, had crept into the convent life, and slowly modified its dull course. The news of her brother's death had affected her but little; but the sight of the familiar handwriting, the very framing of the sentences and choice of words, which had seemed to her like a fresh challenge even from his grave, had revived a thousand passions, jealousies, enmities, which one might have thought dead and buried forever. What ghosts from old years that Graham could not see, what memories from her childhood and girlhood, what shadows from the old Paris life, were thronging round Thérèse Linders, as with changed name and dress she sat there in her convent parlor! Old familiar forms flitting to and fro, old voices ringing in her ears, her brother young, handsome, and indulged, herself plain, unprepossessing, neglected, and a mother whom she had held to and watched till the last, yet turning from her to the son who had scorned

her wishes and broken her heart. It had all happened twenty-five years ago, but to the Superior it seemed but as yesterday. The old hatred blazed up again, and in the form, as it doubtless appeared to her, of an anger righteous even against the dead. Nor was the revival without its charms, with all its old associations of strife and antagonism—like a breeze blowing freshly from the outer world, and suddenly stirring the slow, creeping current of her daily life.

"I never said I would not take charge of my niece," she said; "on the contrary, I have every intention of so doing. I only wish to make it clearly understood that my brother had no sort of claim upon me, and that I consider every line of this letter an insult."

"His child, at least, is innocent," began Graham.

"I am not likely to hold her responsible for her father's misdeeds," says Madame, drawing herself up. "I repeat that I am willing to receive my niece at once, though I cannot suppose that with the education and training she has received, she is likely to be anything but a burden and a care; however, that can be looked to and corrected!"

"Indeed you will find her a most innocent and lovable child," pleaded Graham eagerly, and not without an inward dismay at the idea of our little unconscious Madelon being looked to, and corrected by this grim woman; "she thinks her father was perfection, it is true, but it is through her total want of comprehension of his real character, and of the nature of his pursuits; and—believe me, Madame, it would be cruel to disturb that ignorance."

"She has nothing to fear from me in that respect," said the Superior coldly; "my brother might have spared the threats with which he insults me; his child will never hear his name mentioned by me. From the time she enters this house her past life is at an end; she must learn to forget it, and prepare for the future she will spend here."

"Not as a nun!" cried Graham involuntarily.

"And why not as a nun, Monsieur?"

"It was her father's last wish, his dying request that she should never become a nun: it was the fear of some such design on your part that made him hesitate about

sending her to you, Madame. You must surely understand from his letter how anxious he is on that point."

"I see that he proposes an alternative that I cannot contemplate for a moment; it is not to train actresses that we receive pupils at the convent, Monsieur; and I have too much regard for my niece's welfare not to prepare her for that life which on earth is the most peaceful and blessed, and which will win for its followers so rich a reward hereafter. But pardon me—I cannot expect you to agree with me on this point, and it is one that it is useless for us to discuss."

She rose as she spoke, and Graham rose also; there was nothing more to be said.

"Then it only remains for me to bring Madelon here," he said, "and hand over to you the sum of money which M. Linders left for her use."

"That is all," replied the Superior; "if you can bring her this afternoon I shall be ready to receive her. You must accept my thanks, Monsieur, for your kindness to her, and for the trouble you have taken."

Graham, as he walked back to the hotel, was ready to vow that nothing should induce him to hand Madelon over to the care of her grim aunt. He understood now M. Linders' reluctance to send her to his sister, and sympathized with it fully. Poor little Madelon, with her pretty, impulsive ways, her naïve ignorance—Madelon, so used to be petted and indulged, she to be shut up within those dull walls, with that horrible, harsh, unforgiving woman, to be taught, and drilled, and turned into a nun—he hated to think of it! He would take her away with him, he would hide her somewhere, he would send her to his sister who had half a dozen children of her own to look after, he would make his aunt adopt her—his aunt, who would as soon have thought of adopting the Great Mogul. A thousand impossible schemes and notions flitted through the foolish young fellow's brain as he walked along, chafed and irritated with his interview—all ending, as we have seen, in his coming into the hotel and telling Madelon she was to go to the convent that very afternoon. One thing indeed he determined upon, that against her own will she should never become a nun, if it

were in his power to prevent it. He had promised her father not to lose sight of her, and, as far as he was able, he would keep his engagement.

He did not witness the meeting between his little charge and her aunt. He bade farewell to a tearful, half-frightened little Madelon at the door of the parlor, he saw it close upon her, and it was with quite a heavy heart that he turned away, leaving behind him the little girl who had occupied so large a share of his thoughts and anxieties during the last ten days. He had nothing to detain him in Liége now, and he left it the next morning, with the intention of carrying out as much of his proposed tour as he should find practicable. His original intention had been to proceed from Paris to Strasbourg, and so into Switzerland, and over the Alps to the Italian lakes. So much of his holiday was already gone, however, that he gave up the idea of the lakes; but Switzerland might still be accomplished, and Strasbourg at any rate must be his first point, as it was there that, on leaving England, he had directed his letters to be sent in the first instance, and he expected to find them lying awaiting him.

He did find them, and their contents were such as to drive all thoughts of his tour out of his head. It was with a wild throb of excitement and exultation, such as he had never known before, that, on opening the first that came to hand, one that had been lying there for nearly a week, he read that the regiment to which he was attached was under immediate orders for the Crimea, and that he must return, without loss of time, to England. Even then, however, he did not forget little Madelon. He knew that she would be counting on his promised return, and could not bear the idea of going away without seeing her again, and wishing her good-bye. He calculated that he had still half a day to spare, and, notwithstanding his hurry, resolved to return by Brussels rather than Paris, choosing those trains that would allow him to spend a couple of hours in Liége, and pay a visit to the convent.

It was only three days since he had last seen the white walls and gray roofs that were growing quite familiar to him now, and yet how life seemed to have changed its whole

aspect to him—and not to him only, perhaps, but to somebody else too, who within those walls had been spending three of the saddest, dreariest days her small life had ever known.

When Graham asked for Madelon, he was shown, not into the parlor, but into a corridor leading to it from the outer door; straw chairs were placed here also, on either side of the grating that divided it down the middle, and on the inner side was a window looking into another and smaller court-yard. As Graham sat there waiting, an inner door opened and a number of children came trooping out; they were the *externes*, children of the bourgeois class for the most part, who came to school twice a-day at the convent; indeed they were the only pupils, the building not being large enough to accommodate boarders.

The children laughing and chattering, vanished through the front door to disperse to their different homes, and then, in a minute, the inner door opened again, and a small figure appeared; a nun followed, but she remained in the background, while Madelon came forward with a look of eager expectation on the *mignonne* face that seemed to have grown thinner and paler since Graham had last seen it, only three days ago. His return, so much sooner than she had expected, had filled her with a sudden joy, and raised in her a vague hope, that she stood sadly in need of just then, poor child!

"So you see I have come back sooner than I expected, Madelon," said Graham, taking the little hands that were stretched out to him so eagerly through the grating, "but I don't know what you will say to me, for I shall not have time for the walk I promised you, when I thought I should stay two or three days in Liége. I must go away this afternoon, but I was determined not to leave without wishing you good-bye."

"Go away this afternoon!" faltered Madelon, "then you are going away quite—and I shall never see you again!"

"Yes, yes, some day, I hope," said Horace; "why, you don't think I am going to forget you? My poor little Madelon, I am sorry to have startled you, but I will explain how it is," and then he told her how there was a great war

going on, and he had been called away to join his regiment which was ordered out to the Crimea; "you know," he said smiling at her, "I told you it would never do for you to come marching about with me, and running the chance of being shot at."

He tried to speak cheerfully, but indeed it was not easy with that sad little face before him. Madelon did not answer; she only leant her head against the wooden bars of the grating, and sobbed in the most miserable, heart-broken way. It made Graham quite unhappy to see her.

"Don't cry so Madelon," he kept on saying, almost as much distressed as she was, "I cannot bear to see you cry." And indeed he could not, for the kind-hearted young fellow had a theory that children and dogs and birds and all such irresponsible creatures should be happy as the day is long, and there seemed something too grievous in this overpowering distress in little Madelon. She checked herself a little presently, however, drawing back one hand to wipe away her tears, while she clung to him tightly with the other. He began to talk to her again as soon as she was able to listen, saying everything he could to cheer and encourage her, telling her what he was going to do, and how he would write to her, and she must write to him, and tell him all about herself, and how she must be a good little girl, and study very hard, and learn all sorts of things, and how he would certainly come back some day and see her.

"When?" asks Madelon.

"Ah, that I cannot tell you, but before very long I hope, and meantime you must make haste and grow tall—let me see how tall shall I expect you to be? as tall as that—" touching one of the bars above her head.

She tried to smile as she answered, "It would take me a long time to grow as tall as that."

"Not if you make haste and try very hard," he said; "and by that time you will have learnt such a number of things, music, and geography, and sewing, and—what is it little girls learn?" So he went on talking; but she scarcely answered him, only held his hands tighter and tighter, as if she was afraid he would escape from her. Something seemed to have gone from her in these last few

days, something of energy, and spirit, and hopefulness; Horace had never seen her so utterly forlorn and downcast before, not even on the night of her father's death.

At last he looked at his watch. "I must go, Madelon," he said, "I have to catch the train."

"No, no, don't go!" she cried, suddenly starting from her desponding attitude, "don't go and leave me, I cannot stay here—I cannot—don't go!"

She was holding him so tightly that he could not move, her eyes fixed on his face with an intensity of pleading. He was almost sorry that he had come at all.

"My poor little Madelon," he said, "I must go—I must, you know—there—there, good-bye, good-bye."

He squeezed the little hands that were clinging so desperately to him, again and again, and then tried gently to unloose them; suddenly she relaxed her hold, and flung herself away from him. Graham hastened away without another word, but as he reached the door he turned round for one more look. Madelon had thrown herself down upon the low window-seat, her face buried in her folded arms, her frame shaking with sobs; the nun had come forward and was trying to comfort her—the bare gray walls, the black dresses, the despairing little figure crouching there, and outside the court-yard all aglow in the afternoon sunshine, with pigeons whirring and perching on the sloping roofs, spreading their wings against the blue sky—it was a little picture that long lived in Graham's memory. Poor little Madelon!

CHAPTER VI.

In the Convent.

NOT till Monsieur Horace was indeed gone, and there was no longer any hope of seeing him return, not till the last door was closed between them, the last link broken with the outer world, not till then perhaps did our little Madelon begin to comprehend the change that one brief fortnight had worked in her whole life. Till now, she had scarcely felt the full bitterness of her father's death, or understood that the old, happy, bright, beautiful life was at an end for ever. These last days had been so full of excitement, she had been so hurried from one new sensation to another, that she had not had time to occupy herself exclusively with this great sorrow that had fallen upon her; but there was nothing to distract her now. Her father's death, which she had found so hard to understand in the midst of everyday life and familiar associations, she realized all too bitterly when such realization was aided by the blank convent walls and the dull convent routine, the sorrow that had been diverted for a moment by another strong predominant feeling, returned with overwhelming force when on every side she saw none but strange faces, heard none but unfamiliar voices; liberty, and joy, and affection seemed suddenly to have taken to themselves wings and deserted her, and she was left alone with her desolation.

The child was half-crazed in these first days in the extremity of her grief; the nuns tried to console her, but she was at first beyond consolation. She did not know what to do with her sense of misery, her hopeless yearning, with the sudden darkness which had fallen upon her bright life, and where she was left to grope without one hand stretched out by which she could reach back as it were, into the past, and

grasp some familiar reality that should help her to a comprehension of this strange new world in which she found herself. We hear often enough of the short life of childish troubles, quickly excited, and as quickly forgotten—true enough perhaps of the griefs isolated, so to speak, in the midst of long days of happiness. But the grief that is not isolated? The grief over which the child cries itself to sleep every night, and which wakes with it in the morning, saddening and darkening with its own gloom the day which ought to be so joyous? In such a grief as this, there is, perhaps for the time it lasts, no sorrow so sad, so acute, so hopeless, as a child's. For us, who with our wide experience have lived through so much, and must expect to live through so much more, a strength has risen up out of our very extremity, as we have learnt to believe in a beyond, in a future that must succeed the darkest hour. But a child, as a rule, has neither past nor future; it lives in the present. The past lies behind, already half-forgotten in to-day's happiness or trouble; the future is utterly wide, vague, and impracticable, in nowise modifying or limiting the sorrow which, to its unpractised imagination, can have no ending. When a child has learnt to live in the past, or the future, rather than in the present, it has learnt one of the first and saddest of life's experiences—a lesson so hard in the learning, so impossible to unlearn in all the years to come.

A lesson that our Madelon, too, must soon take to heart, in the midst of such dreary distasteful surroundings, with a past so bright to look back upon, with a future which she can fill with any amount of day-dreams, of whatever hue she pleases—a lesson therefore, which she is not long in acquiring, but with the too usual result, a most weary impatience of the present. The first violence of her grief exhausted itself in time, as was only natural, and something of her old energy and spirit began to show itself again; but the change was not much for the better. She did not mope nor pine, that was not her way; but she became possessed with a spirit of restless petulance, which at first, indeed, was only another phase of unhappiness, but which, not being recognized as such, presently developed into a most decided wilfulness. She turned impatiently from the nun's well-meant kindness

and efforts to console her, which somehow were not what she wanted—not that, but something so different, poor child !—she was cross, peevish, fractious without intending it, scarcely knowing why; the nuns set her down as a perverse, unamiable child: and so it happened, that she had not been many weeks in the convent before she came to be regarded with general disfavor and indifference instead of with the kindly feeling that had at first been shown to the forlorn little stranger.

Graham had indeed wasted some pity on her, in imagining her under the immediate control of her aunt. The Superior had far too many things to think about for her to trouble herself with any direct superintendence of her little niece; Madelon hardly ever saw her, and in fact, of the convent life in general she knew but little. Her lessons she soon began to do with the other children in the class, and for the rest she was placed under the special care of one of the younger Sisters, Sœur Lucie by name.

Like Madelon, Sœur Lucie had been brought, a little ten-year-old orphan to the convent, to be under the care of one of the nuns who was her aunt; and it was perhaps on this account that she was chosen by Mademoiselle Linders as a sort of *gouvernante* for her niece. But there was no other resemblance between this placid, fair-haired, blue-eyed, rosy-cheeked Flemish girl, whose early recollections were all of farms and farm-yards, of flat grassy meadows watered by slow moving streams, of red cows feeding tranquilly in rich pastures, of milking, and cheese-making, and butter-making, of dairies with shining pots and pans and spotless floors, and our vehement brown-eyed Madelon, who in her ten years had seen more of the world than Sœur Lucie was likely to see if she lived to be a hundred. Sœur Lucie had passed a happy peaceful childhood in the convent, and, as she grew up into girlhood, had listened submissively to the words of exhortation which urged her to give up the world and its vanities, which she had never known, and by such voluntary renunciation to pass from a a state of mere negative virtue into that one of superior holiness only to be attained beneath the nun's veil, and behind the convent grating. She took the vows as soon as

she was old enough, endowed the convent with her fortune, and was perfectly happy. She had neither friends nor relations outside this little world in which she had been brought up, and she desired nothing beyond what it could afford her. She had, as she well knew, secured for herself in the next world a sure compensation for any little sacrifices she might have made in this—a reflection that often consoled her under a too prolonged course of prayer and meditation, for which, to say the truth, she had little aptitude—and for the rest, she was universally allowed to be the best compote-maker (the nuns were famous for their compotes, which were in great demand), the best embroiderer, the best altar-decorator in the convent. What more could be expected or demanded of life? Sœur Lucie, at any rate, was quite satisfied with her position, and this perfectly simply-minded, good-tempered little sister was a general favorite. Madelon could not have fallen into kinder hands; Sœur Lucie, if not always very wise, was at least very good-natured, and if she did not win much respect or admiration from our little Madelon, who was not long in discovering that she knew a great deal about a great many things that the nun had never heard or dreamt of, the poor child at least learnt to recognize hers as a friendly face, and to turn to her in these dreary days.

The convent was neither very large nor very wealthy. The building itself had formerly been a château-farm, which, with its sheds and outlying buildings, had, many years ago, been converted with considerable alterations into its present form; rooms had been partitioned off, a little chapel had been built, the hall turned into a refectory, the farmyard and orchard into a pleasant sunny garden with lawn, and flower-beds, and shrubs, with vines and fruit-trees alternating with creepers along the old walls. As for the sisters, few were from the upper ranks of society, belonging for the most part, rather to the middle and bourgeois class. Mademoiselle Linders had gained her present position not less by her superior birth and education, than by that to which she would more willingly have attributed her elevation—a certain asceticism of life which she affected, and extra observance of fasts and vigils, which the good

nuns looked upon with reverence, without caring to emulate such peculiar sanctity in their own persons. The rule was not a strict one, nor, though the Superior was careful to enforce it to its utmost rigor, was the life one of particular hardship or privation. They were a simple, kind, good-hearted set, these Sisters, having their little disputes and contentions and jealousies among themselves occasionally, no doubt, but leading good, peaceable lives on the whole, with each day and hour well filled with its appointed tasks, leading through a continual, not useless, round of embroidery teaching, compote-making, and prayers.

Perhaps some one looking round on them, with their honest, homely Belgian faces, would have tried to imagine some history for them, in accordance with the traditions that cling about convent walls, and associate themselves with the very mention of a nun; and most likely they would have been all wrong. None of these Sisters had had very eventful lives, and they had, for the most part, dropped into their present mode of existence quite naturally. With little romance to look back upon, save such as finds a place in even the homeliest life, with an imperfect middle-class education that had failed to elevate the mind, or give it wide conceptions of life, and religion and duty, a certain satisfaction at having done with secular life and its cares, and at having their future here and hereafter comfortably provided for, was perhaps the general tone among this prosaic, unimaginative community. We are, indeed, far from affirming that in that little society there was no higher tone of religious enthusiasm, that there were not some who not only found their highest religious ideal in the life they had chosen, but to whom it formed, in fact, the highest ideal to which they could attain, and calculated, therefore, to develop in them the best and noblest part of their natures. To such, the appointed, monotonous round, the unquestioning submission to the will of another, the obedience at once voluntary and enforced, would not only bring a gracious sense of repose after conflict, but, by satisfying their religious cravings and aspirations, by demanding the exercise of those virtues which appeared to them at once the highest and the most attainable, would give peace to souls which, in the world's active

life, would have tossed for ever to and fro in reckless unquiet warfare, nor have ever once perceived that in such warfare they might, after all, be fulfilling the noblest ends. "Peace, and rest, and time for heavenly meditation," they had cried, stretching out weary hands to this quiet little harbor of refuge, and perhaps—who knows?—they had there found them.

Such, then, was this little world in which our Madelon suddenly found herself placed to her utter bewilderment at first, so alien was it to all her former experiences, so little could she understand of its meaning, its aims, its spirit and intention; no more than, as it seemed to her, those around her understood her, or her wants and wishes. To her, the convent only appeared inexpressibly *triste* and dreary, a round of dull tasks, enlivened by duller recreations, day after day, for ever bounded by those blank, gray walls—no change, no variety, no escape. The bare, scantily-furnished rooms, the furniture itself, the food, the nuns' perpetual black dress, and ungraceful head-gear—Madelon hated them all, as she gradually recovered from her first desolation, and became alive again to external impressions; and, as the first keenness of her sorrow wore off, this vague sense of general unhappiness and discomfort showed itself in an attitude of opposition and defiance to every one and everything around her. From being helplessly wretched and cross, she became distinctly naughty, and before long our Madelon had drifted into the hopeless position of a child always refractory, always in disgrace, a position from which, when once assumed, it is almost impossible for the small hapless delinquent to struggle free.

That Madelon was very naughty cannot be denied, and the fact surprised no one so much as herself. The nuns, accustomed to all sorts of children of every variety of temper, of every shade of docility and wilfulness, of cleverness and stupidity, found nothing astonishing in one more perverse little specimen, but Madelon could not understand it at all. She was not used to feeling naughty, and did not know what it meant at first. In her life hitherto, when she had been as happy as the day is long, she had had singularly few opportunities for exercising the privilege of every child of Adam, and exhibiting her original waywardness. But it

was far otherwise now, and she could not understand why she always felt cross, always obstinate, always perverse; she only knew that she was very miserable, and it was quite a discovery to be told one day that it was because she was naughty, and that if she were good, she would be happy.

"I always am good," said Madelon, firing up, and speaking from the experience of former days, "and I am not at all happy—I never shall be here."

But alas! it was proved too clearly that she was not at all good, and indeed she began to think so herself, only she did not see how she could help it.

Madelon got into great disgrace in the very first weeks after her arrival at the convent, and this was the occasion of it. The only room vacant for her was a cell that had been occupied by a sister who had died a short time previously—a sister of a devout turn of mind, who had assisted her meditations by the contemplation of a skull of unusual size and shiningness. The cell was a cheerful, narrow little room, looking out on the convent garden, and the first pleasant sensation that Madelon knew in the convent was when she was taken into it, and saw the afternoon sun shining upon its white-washed walls, and the late climbing roses nodding in at the open window; but she became possessed with a perfect horror of the skull. She discovered it the first evening when she was going to bed, and was quite glad to pop her head under the bed-clothes, to shut out all sight and thought of it. But awaking again that first night in her grief and loneliness, she saw a stray moonbeam shining in, and lighting it up into ghastly whiteness and distinctness, as it stood on a little bracket against the wall beneath a tall wooden crucifix. For the first minute she was half paralyzed with terror; she lay staring at it without power to move, and then she would assuredly have run to some one for protection had she known to whom to go, or, indeed, had she not been too terrified to do more than hide her head under the counterpane again. From that time it became a perpetual nightmare to her. By day its terrors were less apparent, though even then, with her innate love for all things bright, and joyous and pleasant, it was a positive grief to her to have such a grim object before her eyes whenever she came into the

room; but at night no sooner was she in bed, and the light taken away, than her imagination conjured up a hundred frightful shapes, that all associated themselves with the grinning death's-head. In vain she covered it up, in vain she shut her eyes—sleeping or waking it seemed always there. At length she could bear it no longer, and entreated piteously that it might be taken away; but Sœur Lucie, to whom the little prayer was made, did not view the matter in at all the same light as Madelon. In the first place, it formed part of the furniture of the room, and had always been there, so far as she knew—which, to the nun, whose life was founded on a series of unquestioned precedents, allowing of nothing arbitrary but the will of the Superior, appeared an unanswerable reason why it should always remain; and, in the next place, with the lack of sympathy that one sometimes remarks in unimaginative minds, she did not in the least understand the terror with which it inspired the child, but assured her, in her good-humored way, that that was all nonsense, and that she would get over it in time. So the skull remained, and Madelon was miserable, till one night, in a moment of desperation, she jumped out of bed, seized it with both hands, and flung it with all her might through the window into the garden below. She was frightened when she heard the crash of falling glass, for in her excitement she had never stopped to open the window, but greatly relieved, notwithstanding, to think that her enemy was gone, and slept more soundly that night than she had done for a long time previously.

Next morning, however, Madelon had a cold, a pane of glass was found in fragments on the gravel walk beneath the window, a skull was discovered, lying among the long grass on the lawn; one can fancy the exclamations, the inquiries, the commotion. Madelon, though not a little frightened, avowed boldly enough what she had done, and so far gained her end that the skull never reappeared, and a safe precedent was established for Sœur Lucie's future guidance; but she got into great trouble at the time, and gained moreover the unenviable distinction of having committed a deed of unparalleled audacity. After this, what might not be expected of such a child? The nuns at once

formed a bad opinion of her, which they owed it to themselves to confirm on the occasion of each succeeding offence, by a reference to this past misdeed which had first taught them of what enormities she was capable.

Matters were no better when there came to be a question of lessons. Madelon did not mind the actual learning, though she wearied a little of the continued application to which she was unused; but she resented to the last degree the astonishment that her ignorance on all sorts of subjects excited both in the nuns who taught her, and in the other children in the class, and which was expressed with sufficient distinctness. "Never studied geography, nor history, nor arithmetic!" cries Sœur Ursule, who superintended the school; "not know the principal cities in Europe, nor the kings of France, nor even your multiplication table!" These speeches, with strongly implied notes of admiration after each sentence, and illustrated by the expression on the faces of a small, open-mouthed audience in the background, roused Madelon's most indignant feelings; she rebelled alike against the injustice of being held up to public reprobation for not knowing what she had never been taught, and against the imputations cast upon her education hitherto. "I can do a great many things you cannot," she would answer defiantly, "I can talk English, and German, and Italian—you can't; I can dance—you can't; I can sing songs, and—and oh! a great many things that you cannot do!" A speech of this sort would bring our poor Madelon into dire disgrace we may be sure; and then angry, impenitent, she would go away into some corner, and cry—oh! how sadly—for her father, for the happy old days, for Monsieur Horace, too, perhaps, to come back, and take her out of all this misery.

Behind the convent was a strip of ground, which produced cabbages and snails on one side, and apple-trees on the other; a straight walk divided these useful productions from each other. When Madelon was *en pénitence* she used sometimes to be sent to walk here alone during the hour of recreation, and would wander disconsolately enough among the apple-trees, counting the apples by way of something to do, and getting intimately acquainted with the snails and green caterpillars among the cabbages. Our poor little

Madelon! I could almost wish that we had kept her always in that pretty green valley where we first saw her; but I suppose in every life there come times when cabbages, or things of no cheerfuller aspect than cabbages, are the only prospect, and this was one of her times. She used to feel very unhappy and very lonely as she paced up and down, thinking of the past—ah, how far that past already lay behind her, how separate, how different from anything she did, or saw, or heard in these dull days! She did not find many friends to console her in her troubles; good-natured Sœur Lucie did indeed try to comfort her when she found her crying, and though she was not very successful in her efforts, Madeleine began to give her almost as much gratitude as if she had been. Sœur Lucie could not think of anything to tell her but that she was very naughty, and must try to be good, which Madelon knew too well already. It would have been more to the purpose, perhaps, if she had told her she was not so very bad after all, but Sœur Lucie never thought of that; perhaps she did not care much about the child; by this time Madelon was beginning to be established as the black sheep of the little community, and Sœur Lucie only expressed the general sense; but being very good-natured, she said in a kind way what other people said disagreeably.

Neither from her companions did she meet with much sympathy, and indeed when out of disgrace, Madelon was apt to be rather ungracious to her school-fellows, with whom she had little in common. The children who came daily to the convent were of two classes—children of the poor and children of a higher bourgeois grade, shopkeepers for the most part. Madelon was naturally classed with the latter of these two sets during the lesson hours, but she stood decidedly aloof from them afterwards, at first through shyness, and then with a sort of wondering disdain. She had never been used to children's society; all her life her father had been careful to keep her apart from companions of her own age, and, accustomed to associate continually with grown-up people, she chose to regard with great contempt the trivial chatter, and squabbles, and amusements of her small contemporaries. After a time, indeed, she condescended to

astonish their minds with some of her old stories, and was gratified by the admiration of a round-eyed, open-mouthed audience, who listened with rapt attention as she related some of the glories of past days, balls, and theatres, and kursaals, princes and counts, and fine dresses; it served in some sort to maintain the sense of superiority which was sorely tried during the untoward events of the lesson hours; but this also was destined to come to an end. One day there was a whispering among her listeners, which resulted in the smallest of them saying boldly:

"Marie-Louise says your papa must have been a very bad man."

"What!" cries Madelon, jumping off the high stool on which she had been seated. This little scene took place during the hour of recreation, when the children ate their luncheon of bread and fruit.

"Ah, yes," says Marie-Louise, a broad-faced, flaxen-haired damsel, half a head taller than Madelon, and nodding her head knowingly. "Those are very fine stories that you tell us there, Mademoiselle, but when I related them at home they said it was clear your papa must have been a very wicked man."

Madelon turned quite white and walked up to the girl, her teeth set, her small fists clinched. "*You* are wicked!" she stammered out; "how dare you say such things? I—I will never speak to you again!" and then she turned, and walked off without another word.

The matter did not end here, however, for the children talked of it among themselves, the nuns heard of it, and, finally, it reached the ears of Madame la Supérieure herself. Madelon, summoned into the awful presence of her aunt, received the strictest orders never again to refer to these past experiences in any way. "You are my child now," says Madame, overwhelming the poor little culprit before her with her severest demeanor, "and must learn to forget all these follies." If Madelon feared any one, it was her aunt, who had never cared to win her little niece's love by any show of affection; the child came before her trembling, and escaped from her gladly. She had no inclination to draw down further reprimands by disobedience in this particular,

so far as words went, nor indeed had she any temptation to do so. From this time she kept more apart from the rest of the children, rarely joining in their games, and preferring even Sœur Lucie's society to that of her small companions. So, altogether, Madelon's first attempts at a convent life were not a success, and time only brought other sad deficiencies to light.

Whatever the nuns may have thought or said concerning her ignorance of history, geography, and arithmetic, it was a far more serious matter when there came to be a question of her religious knowledge. The good sisters were really horrified at the complete blank they found, and lost no time in putting her through a course of the most orthodox instruction. Before she had been a month in the convent, she knew almost as much as Nanette, had learnt why people go to church and what they do there, had studied her catechism, could find her places in her prayer-book, could repeat Ave Marias and Paternosters, and tell her beads like every one else. And so Madelon's questions are answered at last, her perplexities solved, her yearnings satisfied! She apprehended quickly all that she was taught, so far as in her lay, and vaguely perceived something still beyond her powers of apprehension, something that still confusedly connected itself with the great church, with the violinist's playing, with the pictures and the music of old days, and which, for the present, in her new life, found its clearest expression, not in the nuns' teaching, for, kind and affectionate as it in truth was, it was marred from the first to Madelon by the inevitable exclamation of wonder and horror that she should not know all about it already—not in the questions and answers in her catechism, nor in the religious dogmas and formulas which she accepted, but could hardly appreciate—not in all these, but in the little chapel with its gaudy altars, and twinkling lights, its services, and music, and incense. Indeed, apart from all higher considerations, the pictures, the coloring, the singing, all were the happiest relief to the child, who, used to perpetual change and brightness, wearied indescribably of the dull, colorless life, the uniform dress, the want of all artistic beauty in the convent. Her greatest reward when she had been good was to be allowed to join in

the singing in the chapel—her greatest punishment, to be banished from the evening services.

No need, however, to pursue this part of little Madelon's history further. With the nun's instruction, and the learning of her catechism, vanished all that had distinguished her, in this respect, from other children of her years and station. She had learnt most of what can be learnt by such teaching, and for her, as for others, there remained the verifying and realization of these lessons, according to her capacity and experience. Only, one may somehow feel sure that to this passionate, wilful little nature, religion would hardly present itself as one simple, sublime truth, high, pure, and serene as the over-arching, all-embracing heaven, through which the sun shines down on the clashing creeds of men; but rather as a complex, many-sided problem, too often at variance with her scheme of life to be felt after through the medium of conflicting emotions, to be worked out at last through what doubts, questionings, with what perplexities, strivings, yearnings, cries for light—along this in nowise singular path, no need to follow our little Madelon.

For the rest, she imbibed readily enough at this time many of the particular views of religious subjects affected by the nuns, at first, indeed, not without a certain incredulity that such things could be, when her father had never spoken to her about them, nor made her aware of their existence; but presently, with more confidence, as she remembered that he was to have told her all about them when she was older. There were the legends and histories of the saints, for instance, in which Madelon learnt to take special delight, though it may be feared that she regarded them rather as pretty romantic stories, illustrated and glorified by her recollections of the old pictures in Florence, than as the vehicle of religious instruction that the nuns would willingly have made them. She used to beg Sœur Lucie to tell them to her again and again, and the good little nun, delighted to find at least one pious disposition in her small rebellious charge, was always ready to comply with her request, and went over the whole list of saints and their lives, not sparing one miracle or miraculous virtue we may be sure, and telling them all in her simple, matter-of-fact language, with

details drawn from her daily life to give a touch of reality, which invested the mystic old Eastern and Southern legends with a quaint naïve homeliness not without its own charm—like the same subjects as interpreted by some of the old Dutch and Flemish masters, in contrast with the high-wrought, idealized conceptions of the earlier Italian schools. But it was through the medium of these last that Madelon saw them all pass before her—St. Cecilia, St. Catherine, St. Dorothea, St. Agnes, St. Elizabeth—she knew them all by name. Sœur Lucie almost changed her opinion of Madelon when she discovered this—for about a day and a half that is, till the child's next flagrant delinquency—and Madelon found a host of recollections in which she might safely indulge, as she chatted to Sœur Lucie about the pictures, and galleries, and churches of Florence, not a little pleased when the nun's exclamations and questions revealed that she herself had never seen but two churches in her life, that near her old home and the convent chapel.

"Oh, I have seen a great many," Madelon would say, "and palaces too; I daresay you never saw a palace either? but I like the churches best because of the chapels, and altars, and tombs, and pictures. At Florence the churches were so big—oh! as big as the whole convent—but I think the chapel here very pretty too; will you let me help you to decorate the altar for the next fête, if I am good?"

So she chattered on, and these were her happiest hours, perhaps. Sometimes she would be allowed to accompany Sœur Lucie to the big kitchen, and assist in the grand compote-making, which seemed to be going on at all seasons of the year. There, sometimes helping, sometimes perched on her favorite seat on the corner of the table, Madelon would forget her sorrows for awhile in the contemplation of the old farm-kitchen with its rough white-washed walls, decorated with pots and pans, and shining kettles, its shelves with endless rows of blue and white crockery, its great black rafters crossing below the high-pitched ceiling leaving a gloomy space, full of mystery to Madelon's imagination; and then, below, the long white wooden table, the piles of fruit, the busy figures of the nuns as they moved to and fro. Outside in the court-yard the sun would be shining perhaps, the trees

would wave, and cast flickering shadows on Madelon as she sat, the pigeons would come fluttering and perching on the window-sill, and Sœur Lucie, while paring, cutting, boiling, skimming, would crone out for Madelon's benefit the old tales she knew so well that she could almost have repeated them in her sleep. Madelon only begged to be let off the tragical ending, which she could not bear, at last always stopping her ears when the critical moment of the sword, or the wheel, or the fire approached. She took great interest in the history of Ste. Thérèse, especially in the account of her running away in her childhood, which seemed to her most worthy of imitation—only, thinks Madelon, she would have taken care not to have been caught, and brought back again. The subsequent history of the saint she found less edifying; nothing that savored of conventual life found favor in Madelon's eyes in these days; and indeed her whole faith in saints and legends was rudely shaken one day by a broad and somewhat reckless assertion on the part of Sœur Lucie, that all the female saints had been nuns—an assertion certainly unsupported by the facts, whether legendary or ascertained, but which had somehow become a fixed idea in Sœur Lucie's mind, and was dear to the heart of the little nun.

"They were not nuns like you, then," says Madelon at last, after some combating of the point, "for they could go out, and walk about, and do a great many things you must not do—and if I were a saint, I would never, never become a nun!"

"But it is the nuns that have become saints," cries Sœur Lucie, with the happiest conviction; and Madelon, unable to argue out her own ideas on the subject, contented herself with repeating that anyhow they had not all been nuns like Sœur Lucie, which was indisputable.

These were, as we have said, Madelon's happiest times, and indeed they hardly repaid the child for long days of weariness and despondency, for hours of heart-sick longing for she knew not what, of objectless hoping, of that saddest form of home-sickness, that knows of no home for which to pine. In all the future there was but one point on which her mind could rest—Monsieur Horace's promised return,

and that was too vague, too remote to afford her much comfort. And her own promise to him, had she forgotten that? She would not have been the Madelon that we know if she had done so, but we need hardly say that she had not been two days in the convent before she instinctively perceived how futile were all those poor little schemes with which she had been so busy the evening before she parted with Graham, how impossible it would be to ask or obtain her aunt's permission for going to Spa on such an errand. The convent was to all intents and purposes a prison to our little Madelon, and she could only wait and cherish her purpose till a happier moment.

She heard twice from Graham in the first few months. He wrote just before leaving England, and once from the Crimea; but this last letter elicited an icy response from the Superior, to the effect generally that her niece being now under her care, and receiving the education that would fit her for the life that would be hers for the future, she wished all old connections and associations to be broken off; in short, that it would be useless for Graham to write any more letters, as Madelon would not be allowed to see them. Graham received this letter at Balaklava, at the end of a long day's work, and laughed out loud as he read the stiff, formal little epistle, which, to the young man in the midst of the whirl and bustle of camps and hospitals, seemed like a voice from another world; there was something too ludicrous in the notion of a child of eleven years old being forbidden to receive letters, because she might possibly be a nun nine or ten years hence.

"As for that, we'll see about it by-and-by, old lady," he said to himself, "but in the meantime there is no use in writing letters that are not to be delivered;" and then he thrust Mademoiselle Linders' letter into his pocket, and thought no more about it.

So Madelon heard nothing more of Monsieur Horace, though she often, often, thought of him, and wondered what he was doing. He was very busy, very hard-worked; an army-surgeon had no sinecure in the Crimea in those days, as we know, and it was perhaps well for the child, who cared more for him than for any one else in the world,

that she knew nothing of his life at this time, of wintry battle-fields and hospital tents, of camps and trenches, where, day and night, he had to fight his own battle with sickness, and wounds and death. No news from the war came to Madelon's ears, no whisper from all the din and clamor that were filling Europe, penetrated to this quiet, out-of-the-world, little world in which her lot was cast. The mighty thunder of the guns before Sebastopol rolled, echoing, to the north, and roused sunny cities basking in the south, and stirred a million hearts in the far islands of the west; but it died away before the vine-covered gate, the white-washed walls of the little Belgian convent. There life stole on at an even pace, little asked of it, yielding little in return, and among that peaceful Sisterhood, one little restless spirit, ever seeking and feeling after what she could not find, looking in the faces of all around her, if so be some one could help her, and, with a child's instinct, rejecting each in turn.

CHAPTER VII.

Fever.

FOR more than two uneventful years Madelon remained in the convent; but early in the third spring after her arrival, a low fever broke out, which for the time completely disturbed the peaceful, even current of existence there, and, by its results, altered, as it happened, the whole course of her own life.

She was between twelve and thirteen then, and had grown into a slim little maiden, rather tall for her age, with a little pale face, as in old days, but with her wavy brown hair all braided now, and fastened in long plaits round her head. In these two years she has become somewhat reconciled to her convent life; not, indeed, as a permanent arrangement—it never occurred to her to regard it in that light—but as something that must be endured till a new future should open out before her. She learns her lessons, sings in the chapel, knows something of compote-making, and can embroider with skilful little fingers almost after Sœur Lucie's own heart. She still holds aloof from her companions, turning to Sœur Lucie for society, though rather with the feeling of the simple-hearted little nun being *bon camarade*, than with any deeper sentiment of friendship or respect. She is rarely *en pénitence* now; the vehement little spirit seems laid; and if something of her old spring and energy have gone with it, if she is sometimes sad, and almost always quiet, there is no one to note it much, or to heed the change that has apparently come over her. And yet Madelon was in truth little altered, and was scarcely less of a child than when Graham had brought her to the convent. She had learned a variety of things, it is true; she could have named all the principal cities in Europe now, and though she still

stumbled over the kings of France, her multiplication-table was unexceptionable; but her education had been one of acquisition rather than of development. Her mind had not yet had time to assimilate itself with those around her, nor to become reconciled to the life that was so at variance with all her old traditions; and she maintained a nucleus, as it were, of independent thought, which no mere extraneous influences or knowledge could affect. In the total silence imposed upon herself, and those around her, concerning her past life, there had been no possibility of modifying her ideas on that subject, and they were still at the same point as when she entered the convent. She still clung to her father's memory, with all the passionate love of which her ardent little soul was capable; she still believed in his perfection, and held to her recollections of the old days with a strength and tenacity only enhanced by the contrast which her present life daily forced upon her. The past lived in her memory as a bright, changeful dream, varying from one pleasure to another, with an ever-shifting background of fair, foreign towns and cities, kursaals, palaces, salons, gardens, mountains, and lakes, and quiet green nooks of country—all, as it seemed to her, with the power of generalization that seizes on the most salient points, and takes them as types of the whole, shining in sunlight that never clouded, under clear blue skies that never darkened. Madelon knew that that time had gone by for ever; and yet, in all her dreams for the future, her imagination never went beyond a repetition of it all—only for her father she, perhaps, substituted Monsieur Horace; for Monsieur Horace, we may be sure, was not forgotten, any more than her promise to him; though, indeed, this last had been so long in abeyance that she had ceased to think of it as likely to be speedily fulfilled. She had almost come to regard it as one of the many things referred to that somewhat vague period when she should be grown up, and when, in some way—how she did not know—she would be released from the convent and from Aunt Thérèse, and be at liberty to come and go as she pleased. In the meantime she had almost given up hoping for Monsieur Horace's return. The time when she had last seen him and heard from him already seemed so remote to her childish memory. No one

ever spoke to her about him, and he never wrote to her. She did not for a moment think he had forgotten her; she had too much confidence in him for that; but by degrees a notion, vague at first, but gradually becoming a fixed idea destined to have results, established itself in foolish little Madelon's head, that he was waiting till he should hear from her that his fortune was made before he would come back to her. Madelon would get quite unhappy when she thought of this—he must think her so faithless and forgetful, yet how could she help it. That the promise had made as deep an impression upon him as upon her she never doubted for a moment; and was it not most possible, and even probable, that he was expecting to hear of the result, perhaps even in want of this wonderful fortune, on which he must be counting? It was a sad thought, this, to our Madelon, but gradually it became a confirmed one in her mind.

How long this state of things would have lasted—whether, with the fading of childish impressions, present abiding influences might have taken possession of her, whether, some few years hence, some sudden development of her devotional tendencies might have roused her latent powers of enthusiasm, and turned them in a new direction just at the moment when youthful ardor is most readily kindled, and tender, fervent hearts most easily touched—whether, in such a case, our little Madelon, inspired with new beliefs, would have renounced her old life in the fervor of her acceptance of the new, and, after all, have taken the nun's vows, and been content to allow her native energy and earnestness to find scope in the loftiest aspirations of a convent life—all this can never now be known. Something there was in her character which, under certain conditions, might have developed in such a direction. The time might, indeed, surely would have come, had she remained in the convent, when a sudden need and hunger for sympathy, and perhaps excitement, would have risen in her soul, too keen and imperative to be satisfied with past memories; and when, in the absence of all support and friendship in the outer world, she might have seized on whatever she could find in the narrow circle in which she moved, to still that imperious craving. Not in vain, then, might have appeared

those old dreams and visions in Florence long ago. Madelon might have learnt to find in them a new and deep significance, an interpretation in accordance with her latest teaching, and through the dim years they might have come back to her—prophetic warnings, as she might have been taught to consider them—linking themselves with present influences, to urge her on to one course. Her father's last command, her own promises, sacred as she held them now, might have availed nothing then, against what she might have been taught to consider a voice from on high, a call of more than earthly authority.

Such, we say, might have been the turn things would have taken with Madelon, had the uninterrupted, monotonous convent life continued to be hers. But long before her mind was prepared for any such influences, early in the third year after her father's death, certain events occurred, which brought this period of her history to an abrupt close.

How, or why the fever broke out—whether it was the result of a damp, unhealthy winter, or through infection brought by one of the school-children, or from any other obvious cause, we need not inquire here. It first showed itself about the middle of February, and within a fortnight half the nuns had taken it, the school was broken up, and the whole convent turned into a hospital for the sick and dying.

Two of the sisters died within the first week or two; one was very old, so old, indeed, that the fever seemed to be only the decisive touch needed to extinguish the feeble life, that had been uncertainly wavering for months previously; the other was younger and much beloved. And then came a sense as of some general great calamity, a sort of awe-struck mourning, with which real grief had perhaps little to do. The Superior herself had been struck with the fever, and in three days she was dead. Her vigils, her fastings, the wearying abnegations of her stern, hard life had left her little strength for struggling against the disease when it laid hold of her at last, and so she too died in her cell one cold, bleak March morning, with a hushed sisterhood gathered round her death-bed, and gazing on it, as on that of a departing saint. Little beloved, but much revered, Thérèse Lin-

ders also had got that she had labored for, and was now gone to prove the worth of it; that which she had valued most in her narrow world had been awarded her to the full —much honor, but small affection; much glorification to her memory as to one of surpassing sanctity, few tears of tender or regretful recollection. She had had a strange, loveless life, with a certain pathos in it too, as in the life of every human being, if looked at aright. Not always, one may imagine, had such cold, relentless pietism, such harsh indifference possessed her. She lies there now, still and silent for evermore on earth, a crucifix between her hands, tapers burning at her head and feet, with the hard lines fixed on her cold gray face; and yet she also had been a little, soft, round child, with yearnings too, like other children, for a mother's kisses and a mother's love. "Go away, Adolphe, you are very naughty, and I do not love you; mamma always kisses you, and she never, never kisses me!" This little speech, uttered by our poor saintly Superior when she was but eight years old, may perhaps give the key to much in her after life; and if we cannot, with an admiring sisterhood, henceforth count this unhappy, soured woman in our catalogue of saints, we will at least grant her a place among the great company of "might-have-beens," most inscrutable problems in this puzzling life of ours, and so bid her a not unkindly farewell.

Madelon, meanwhile, knew nothing of these things; she had taken the fever also, and while death was busy in other parts of the convent, she lay unconscious in her little cell, tossing in delirium, or lying in feverish stupor, with Sœur Lucie coming softly in and out. In this desolated overworked household, the child had come to be considered as only another item of trouble, hardly of anxiety; for her life or death just then was felt to be of the very smallest consequence to any one. The one tie that had bound her to the convent had been snapped by her aunt's death; if she lives, think the nuns—if indeed they find time to think of her at all—she is a burden on our hands; if she dies, well then, one more coffin and another grave. This is perhaps the ebb-tide of Madelon's importance in the world; never before has been, never again will be, we may trust, her exist-

ence of so little moment to any human being—that existence which, meanwhile, in spite of all such indifference, in perfect unconsciousness of it indeed, is beginning to assert itself again. For though the Superior has died amid lamentations, and the places of Sœurs Eulalie and Marguerite will know them no more, our little Madelon, over whom there are none to lament or rejoice, will live.

One afternoon she awoke, as from a long sleep. The low sun was shining into the cell, lighting up the wooden crucifix on the white-washed wall; Sœur Lucie, in her strait coif and long black veil, was sitting by the bedside reading her book of hours; through the window could be seen a strip of blue sky crossed by some budding tree in the convent garden, little birds were beginning to chirp and twitter among the branches. The spring had come in these last days while Madelon had been lying there, and in the midst of the glad resurrection of all nature, she too was stirring and awakening to consciousness, and a new life.

CHAPTER VIII.

Madelon overhears a Conversation.

AMIDST the springing flowers, the twitter of pairing birds and the bursting of green leaves through the brown, downy husks, in the bounteous April weather, Madelon began to recover rapidly. She was nursed with kindness and care, if not exactly with tenderness, by Sœur Lucie; but tenderness our little black sheep had long since learnt not to expect in the convent, and she hardly missed it now. It was in the first days of her convalescence that she heard of the death of her Aunt Thérèse, through some chance remark of one of the Sisters who came into her cell. Had it not been for this, they would have kept it from her longer; but the news scarcely affected her at all. He aunt had shown her no affection in these last two years that they had lived under the same roof, and, on the few occasions on which Madelon had come in contact with her, the pale, cold face, and severe manner of the nun had inspired her niece with a dread, which only lacked opportunity to become a more active dislike. She heard the news then with apathy, and was still too languid and weak to think of the loss in reference to herself, or to realize that, so far as she knew, she had now no relation in the world. Nor did such realization come at once, even when she grew stronger; her aunt had counted for so little in her present mode of life, that it did not occur to her that her death might bring any possible change into it; indeed, as we have said, she had ceased to look for any immediate change. Monsieur Horace had brought her to the convent, and Sœur Lucie took care of her there, and so she supposed matters would go on for the present.

If, however, the news of her aunt's death affected her but little, it was quite otherwise with another conversation

that she overheard a few days later, and which, indeed, was not meant for her ears either. She had awakened one evening from a long, sound sleep, and was lying quietly in the dusk, dreamily wondering how soon she should make up her mind to arouse herself and take the medicine that she knew awaited her as soon as she should declare herself awake, when Sœur Ursule entered the room. She had come with some message to Sœur Lucie, and when it was delivered, stood chatting for a few minutes by the window where Sœur Lucie sat knitting. She was a gaunt, brisk, elderly woman, who had been governess in a large school, before an opportune legacy had enabled her to fulfil her dearest wish and enter the convent, where, with fresh zeal and energy, she resumed the duties most congenial to her, as teacher and superintendent of the school. Thoroughly devout and conscientious, and with a kind heart *au fond*, she nevertheless brought with her into her new sphere all the habits and modes of thought acquired during a long struggle with a very hard, secular world—a practical turn of mind, verging on hardness, a dictatorial manner, a certain opinion-activeness, which still showed itself now and then in oddest contrast with the habitual submission demanded of a nun.

"She looks better this evening," she said now, nodding towards the bed where Madelon lay with her eyes still closed.

"Yes, yes, she is getting on; I shall have her up to-morrow, I hope," answered Sœur Lucie, with some natural pride in this specimen of successful nursing.

"Ah, well—she could have been better spared though, than some that are gone," answered the other; "but no doubt it is all for the best. Not but that I am glad that the child is recovering—still we shall certainly find her a great burden on our hands."

"It is true, then," cried Sœur Lucie, "what I heard Sœur Marie saying—that our sainted mother had bequeathed her to the care of the convent, and left directions that she is to take the veil as soon as she is old enough."

"Yes, it is true enough, and, as I was saying, all is no doubt for the best; otherwise it is really a great

charge for us to have a child of that age on our hands to bring up."

"But that was just my case," replied Sœur Lucie simply. "I have not been out of the convent for more than six months since I was ten years old, as you know, Sœur Ursule."

"You, *ma Sœur!* That was quite a different matter; every one knows what a marked vocation you had even in your childhood, and how willingly you devoted your fortune, and resigned all worldly hopes—whereas this little one has always been the most tiresome child in the class, and, moreover, will have to live at the expense of the convent."

"That is true," said Sœur Lucie reflecting; "I never heard that she had any money, and of course people cannot live for nothing."

"She has not a sou—you may depend upon it," said Sœur Ursule emphatically; "she brought nothing with her when she came."

"Nothing!" cried Sœur Lucie.

"Or so little, that it must be all gone by this time. I really do not see how it can be arranged—Sœurs Marie and Catherine settled it with our late sainted Superior, and I think even they are beginning to repent a little, for they were talking only this morning of all the expense we have had lately."

"Poor child," murmured Sœur Lucie, who had no unkindly feelings towards her little charge, "there is surely enough for one more."

"That is all very well, *ma Sœur*, but an extra person is an extra person, as we all know. We might keep the child for a time out of charity, but when there is a question of her taking the vows, and living here always, it is another matter altogether. It has not been the custom in our house to receive sisters without *dots*, and it will never do—never; but of course our sainted mother knew best, and my opinion was not asked; though it might have been as well worth having as that of some others."

"Poor child," said good little Sœur Lucie again, looking towards the bed; "and she has improved very much lately, don't you think so, *ma Sœur?*"

"Oh, yes, she has improved, no doubt; it would be astonishing if she had not, after being here more than two years; but that is not the question. However, I must be going," she added, "I have a hundred things to do before vespers. And the border for that altar-cloth will be ready by the end of the month, you think?"

"I hope so," answered Sœur Lucie. "Madelon shall help me as soon she is strong enough again; she can embroider quite nicely now."

"So much the better; she will have to do plenty by-and-by, and make herself useful if she is to stay here."

Sœur Ursule left the room as she spoke, and Sœur Lucie, with her knitting in her lap, sat meditating in the darkness. Presently a restless movement in the bed roused her. "Are you awake, Madelon?" she said softly.

No answer, only another toss, and a sort of long sigh. Sœur Lucie rose, lighted a candle, measured out some medicine, and then with the glass in one hand, and the light in the other, she came to the bedside. Madelon was lying with her back towards her, her arms flung over her head, her face buried in the pillow. She did not move, and Sœur Lucie touched her gently.

"It is time to take your medicine, *mon enfant*," she said.

Madelon turned round then, and taking the glass, drank off the contents without a word; as she gave it back to the nun, something in her face or expression fairly startled the little sister.

"Why, whatever is the matter, *mon enfant?*" she cried, "you must have been dreaming, I think."

"No, I have not been dreaming," answered Madelon; and then, as the nun turned away to put the glass and candle on the table, she caught hold of her gown with all the strength of which her feeble fingers were capable.

"Don't go, please don't go, Sœur Lucie," she said, "I want to speak to you."

"In a moment; I am not going," answered the sister. "Well, what is it, *ma petite?*" she added, coming back to the bedside.

"What—what was it Sœur Ursule was saying to you just now?" asks Madelon.

"Just now!" cried Sœur Lucie, taken aback; "why, I thought you were asleep."

"No, I was not asleep," Madelon answered, "I only had my eyes shut."

"But that is very naughty, *mon enfant*, to pretend to be asleep when you are awake."

"I didn't pretend," said Madelon aggrieved, "only I hadn't opened my eyes, and I could not help hearing what you said."

"Ah well, if you heard, there is no use in my telling you," says Sœur Lucie, who was not at all above using that imperfect, but irrefragable, logic familiar to us from our nurseries; "so you had better go to sleep again, for I cannot stop here any longer. Let me smooth your pillow."

"No," said Madelon, escaping from her hands with an impatient toss. "Ah, don't go away yet," she added piteously. "Was it true what Sœur Ursule said about me?"

"About you, *mon enfant?*"

"Yes, about me—that I was to become a nun."

"Ah!" said Sœur Lucie, with the air of being suddenly enlightened, "yes—yes, I suppose so, since she said it. Now I must go, and do you go to sleep."

"No, no," cried Madelon, raising herself in the bed and stretching out both arms after Sœur Lucie's retreating figure. "Ah, Sœur Lucie, don't leave me. I can't be a nun; don't let them make me a nun!"

There was something so pitiful and beseeching in her accent, something so frail-looking in the little, white, imploring hands, that Sœur Lucie's heart was touched. She came back again.

"*Ecoutes*, Madelon," she said, "you will be ill again to-morrow if you talk so much; lie down now, and tell me what it is you want. No one is going to make you a nun now, you know."

"No, not now, but by-and-by. Is it true that Aunt Thérèse said I was to be made one?"

"Yes, that is true enough, I believe; but there is nothing to be unhappy about in that," answered Sœur Lucie, who naturally looked at things from a different point of view than

Madelon's. "There are many girls who would be glad of such a chance; for you see, *mon enfant*, it is only because nothing could be refused to our late sainted Superior, that it has been arranged at all."

"Sœur Ursule said I should be a burden," answered Madelon. "I don't want to be a burden; I only want to go away. Ah? why do you keep me? I am miserable here; I always have been, and I always shall be—always."

"But that is foolish," replied Sœur Lucie, "for you will be very happy—far happier than you could ever be out in the world, *ma petite;* it is full of snares, and temptations, and wickedness, that never can come near us here. Look at me; I was no older than you when I first came here, and never has girl been happier, I believe. No, no, Madelon," she went on, with a good-natured wish to make things pleasant, "you will stay with us, and be our child, and we will take care of you."

"I don't want you to take care of me!" cries Madelon, the burning tears starting painfully to her eyes. "I hate convents, and I hate nuns, and it is wicked and cruel to keep me here!"

"Am I cruel and wicked? Do you hate me?" said Sœur Lucie, rather aggrieved in her turn.

"No, no," cried Madelon, with compunction, and throwing her arms round Sœur Lucie's neck; "you are very kind, Sœur Lucie, and you won't let them make me a nun, will you? You will tell them all that I should be miserable—ah! I should die, I know I should!"

"Well, well, we will not talk about it any more to-night. As for me, I have nothing to do with it—nothing; but I cannot have you make yourself ill with chattering; so now let me put your pillow straight, and then you must go to sleep as fast as you can."

With a final shake of the pillow and arrangement of the bed-clothes, Sœur Lucie went away, leaving Madelon, not to sleep, but to lie broad awake, framing the most dismal little pictures of the future. And was this to be the end of it all, then?—the end of her vague dreams, her undefined hopes, which, leaping over a dim space of intervening years, had rested on a future of indefinite brightness lying somewhere

outside these convent walls? Ah, was all indeed at an end? Never to pass these dull walls again, never to see anything but these dreary rooms,—all her life to be one unvarying relentless routine, day after day, year after year—to be forced to teach stupid children, like Sœur Ursule, or to make jam and embroider altar-cloths, like Sœur Lucie, to say such long prayers, and to wear such ugly dresses, thinks poor Madelon, with a queer jumble of the duties and obligations of a nun's life. Ah! what would be the use of getting well and strong again, if that were all that life had in store for her? "Why did I not die?" thinks the poor child, tossing restlessly from side to side. "I wish I was dead! Ah! why did I not die? I wish I had never been born!" To her, as to all inexperienced minds, life appeared as a series of arbitrary events, rather than as a chain of dependent circumstances ceaselessly modifying each other, and she could not conceive the possibility of any gradual change of position being brought about in the slow course of years. The long succession of gray, weary days, which she had lately taught herself to consider as a path that must be traversed, but which would still lead ultimately to a future of most supreme happiness, suddenly seemed to terminate in a grave black as death itself, from which there could be no escape. "If papa were here," thinks Madelon, "he would never allow it; he would never leave me here in this horrible place, he would take me away. Oh! papa, papa, why did you die?" And burying her face in the pillow, she began to sob and cry in her weakness and despair.

But this last thought of her father had suggested a new set of ideas and memories to Madelon, and by-and-by she stopped crying, and began to think again confusedly at first, but presently with a more definite purpose gradually forming itself in the darkness of her bewildered thoughts. Had she not promised her father never to become a nun? Perhaps he had thoughts of something like this happening, and that was why he had made her promise, and of course she must keep her word. But how is she to do that? wonders Madelon. If Monsieur Horace were here, indeed, he might help her. Ah, if Monsieur Horace were but here! Should she write to him, and tell him how unhappy she

was, and ask him to come and take her away? He had given her his English address, and told her to be sure and let him know, if she were in any trouble, or wanted any help. "But then," thinks our foolish little Madelon, with the most quixotic notions busy in her tired little brain, "I have not done what I said I would, and he will think, perhaps, I want to break my word." Alas! must that grand surprise that was to have been prepared for him, all those fine schemes, and plans, and projects, must they all fall to the ground? Was she never, never to show him how much she loved him? And yet, if they made her a nun, how could she do it all? He would never have his fortune made then, though she had promised to do it, and he would think she had forgotten him, and cared nothing about him. So wearily did Madelon's mind revolve, dwelling most of all on that promise made so long ago; and as she realized the possibility of her never being able to fulfil it at all, she became possessed with a feverish desire to get up that very moment and set about it. If—if—ah, supposing she were to run away—Aunt Thérèse is not here now, and she would not be afraid of the other nuns finding her, she would hide herself too well for that—supposing she were to run away, go to Spa, make the fortune, and then write to Monsieur Horace? Would not that be an idea?

When Sœur Lucie came in an hour later, to look after Madelon, she found her fast asleep; the traces of tears were still on her cheeks, and the pillow and bedclothes were all disarranged and tossed about again, but she was lying quite quietly now. Sœur Lucie stood for a moment, looking down upon the child's white face, that had grown so small and thin. Her hair had been all cut off during her illness, and curled in soft brown rings all over her head, as when she was a little child, and indeed there was something most childlike in the peaceful little face, which had a look of repose that it seldom wore when the wistful brown eyes were open, with their expression of always longing and seeking for something beyond their ken. Somehow Sœur Lucie was touched with a sudden feeling of unwonted tenderness for her little charge. "*Pauvre petite,*" she murmured, gently raising one hand that hung over the side of

the bed, and smoothing back a stray lock of hair. Madelon opened her eyes for a moment; "Monsieur Horace," she said, "I have not forgotten, I—I will—" and then she turned away and fell sound asleep again.

CHAPTER IX.

The Red Silk Purse.

It was about three weeks later, that Madelon was sitting one evening at her bedroom window; it was open, and the breeze blew in pleasantly, bringing with it the faint scent of early roses and lingering violets. In the garden below, lengthening shadows fell across the cherished centre square of grass, the trees were all golden-green in the western sunlight; black-veiled Sisters were walking about breaking the stillness with their voices and laughter; along the convent wall the vines were shooting and spreading their long tender sprays, and on the opposite side a great westeria was shedding showers of lilac blossoms with every breath of wind among the shrubs and evergreens below.

Madelon, sitting forward on her chair, her chin propped on her hands, her embroidery lying in her lap, saw and heeded none of these things; her eyes were fixed dreamily on the sky, but her thoughts were by no means dreamy, very intent rather upon one idea which she was endeavoring to rescue from the region of dreams and vagueness, and set before her with a distinctness that should insure a practical result. This idea, which indeed was no new one, but simply that of running away from the convent, which had first occurred to her three weeks before, had presented itself with more assurance to her mind during every day of her convalescence; and now that she was nearly well again, it was fast becoming an unalterable resolution. There were difficulties in the way—she was considering them now—but she knew she should be able to overcome them; we say advisedly; she *knew* it, for the child already recognized in herself an unwavering strength of mind and purpose, which as-

sured her that no foreseen obstacles could stand between her and any fixed end that she proposed to herself; as for unforeseen ones—our small-experienced Madelon did not take them into account at all.

It was not that she was a prodigy compounded of nothing but firmness, and resolution, and obstinacy, this little slender girl, who sat there in the evening sunlight, puzzling out her plan; there were plenty of weak points in her character, which would perhaps make themselves suficiently apparent in years to come. But these at least she possessed —a persistency of purpose in whatever she undertook on which she could confidently rely, and a certain courage, and independence that promised to carry her successfully through all difficulties; and these things are, I think, as the charmed cakes that the Princess carried to the enchanted castle, and wherewith she tamed the great lions that tried to oppose her entrance. Madelon sees before her a very fair enchanted castle, lying outside these convent walls—even something like a Prince to rescue—and she will not fail to provide herself with such charms as lie within her reach to appease any possible menagerie that may be lying between her and it.

She had already sketched out a little scheme whereby she might redeem the two promises which, lying latent in her mind for these two years past, had suddenly sprung into such abnormal activity, and, in the limited circle of her small past, present and future, monopolized at once her memories, and energies, and hopes. She must get out of the convent—that was evidently the first thing to be done; and this safely accomplished, the path of action seemed tolerably clear. She would make her way to Spa, which, as she well knew, was not far off, and go to a hotel there, which her father had frequented a good deal, and where there was a good-natured landlady, who had always petted and made much of the little lonely child. Once at Spa—but here Madelon's plans assumed a bright and dazzling aspect, which, undimmed by any prophetic mist, unshaded by any foreboding cloud, almost deprived them of that distinctness so requisite for their calm and impartial consideration. All the difficulties seemed to lie on the road between

the convent and the Redoute at Spa; once there, there could be no doubt but that this fortune, which she was pledged in her poor little foolish idea to obtain, would be made in no time at all. She could perfectly figure to herself the piles of notes and gold that would flow in upon her; and how she would then write to Monsieur Horace at the address he had given her; and then Madelon had in her own mind a distinct little picture of herself, pouring out a bag of gold at Monsieur Horace's feet, with a little discourse, which there was still time enough to compose!

But it could not be denied that there were two formidable obstacles standing between her and this so brilliant consummation; first, that she was not yet out of the convent, and that there was no perfectly obvious means of getting out; secondly, that she had no money. The former of these objections did not, however, appear absolutely insurmountable. Just beneath her window the wall was covered with a tangle of vines, and jessamine, and climbing roses; to a slim, active child, with an unalterable purpose, the descent of even twenty feet of wall with so much friendly assistance might have seemed not unfeasible; but, in fact, Madelon's window was raised hardly ten feet above the flower-bed below. Once in the garden, there was, as in most old garden walls, a corner where certain displaced bricks would afford a sufficient footing, aided by the wide-spreading branches of the great westeria, and the tough shoots of clinging ivy. The wall was not high; what might be its aspect on the other side she was not certain, though she had an unpleasant haunting memory of a smooth, white-washed surface; but once on the top, it would be hard indeed if she could not get down; and then, as she knew, there was only a field to be crossed, and she would find herself in the high-road leading from Liége to Chaudfontaine, and so through Pepinster to Spa. No, getting out of the convent was not the difficulty. It would be easier, certainly, if one could walk out at the front door; but this being a possibility not to be calculated upon, two walls should not stand in the way. The real problem, of which even Madelon's sanguine mind saw no present solution, was how to get on without money, or rather how to procure any. She

had none, not even a centime, and she was well aware that her fortune could in no wise be procured without some small invested capital; and besides, how was she to get to Spa at all without money? Could she walk there? Her ideas of the actual distance were too vague for her to make such a plan with any certainty; and besides, the chances of her discovery and capture by the nuns (chances too horribly unpleasing, and involving too many unknown consequences for Madelon to contemplate them with anything but a shudder), would be multiplied indefinitely by so slow a method of proceeding. Certainly this question of money was a serious one, and it was this that Madelon was revolving, as she sat gazing at the golden sunset sky, when she was startled by a sudden rumbling and tumbling in the corridor; in another moment the door was burst open, and Sœur Lucie and another sister appeared, dragging between them a corded trunk, of the most secular appearance, which had apparently seen many places, for it was pasted all over with half effaced addresses and illustrated hotel advertisements.

Madelon gave a little cry and sprang forward; she knew the box well, and had brought it with her to Liége, but had never seen it since then till to-day. It was like a little bit of her former life suddenly revived, and rescued from the past years with which so much was buried.

"This is yours apparently, Madeleine," said Sœur Lucie, her broad, good-humored face illumined with a smile at the child's eagerness; "the sight of it has done you good, I think; it is long since you have looked so gay."

"Yes, it is mine," cried Madelon; "where has it been all this time, Sœur Lucie?"

"Sœur Marie and I were clearing out a room downstairs, and we found it pushed away in a corner, so we thought we had better bring it up for you to see what is in it."

"I know," said Madelon, "it was a trunk of mamma's, there are some things of hers put away in it, I think. I never saw them, for we did not take it about with us everywhere; but I brought it with me from Paris, and I suppose Aunt Thérèse put it away."

"Our sainted Superior doubless knew best," said Sœur Lucie, with a ready faith, which was capable, however, of

adjusting itself to meet altered circumstances, "but we are clearing out that room below, which we think of turning into another store-room; we have not half space enough for our confitures as it is, and another large order has arrived to-day. And so, Madeleine, we had better see if there is anything in the box you wish to keep, and then it can be sent away. We shall perhaps find some clothes that can be altered for you."

"Yes," said Madelon, on whom, in spite of her new schemes and resolutions, that little sentence about sending the box away had a chilling effect; it was like cutting off another link between her and the world. Sœur Lucie went down on her knees and began to uncord the trunk.

"Here is the key tied to it," she said; "now we shall see."

She raised the lid as she spoke, but at that moment a bell began to ring.

"That is for vespers," she cried, "we must go; Madeleine, in a few days you will be able to come to the chapel again; to-night you can stay and take out these things. Ah, just as I thought—there are clothes," she added, taking a hurried peep, and then followed Sœur Marie out of the room.

Madelon approached the box with a certain awe mixed with her curiosity. It was quite true that she had never seen what it contained; she only knew that it had been her mother's, and that various articles belonging to her had been put away in it after her death. It had never been opened since, to her knowledge; her father had once told her that she might have the contents one day when she was a big girl, but that was all she knew about it.

Madelon had no very keen emotion respecting the mother she had never known; her father had spoken of her so seldom, and everything in connection with her had so completely dropped out of sight, that there had been no scope for the imaginative, shadowy adoration with which children who have early lost their mother are wont to regard her memory; her father had been everything to her, and of her mother's brother she had none but unpleasant recollections. But now, for the first time, she was brought face to face with

something that had actually been her mother's, and it was with a sort of instinctive reverence that she went up to the box and took out one thing after another. There was some faint scent pervading them all, which ever afterwards associated itself in Madelon's mind with that hour in the narrow room and gathering twilight.

There was nothing apparently of the smallest value in the trunk. Any trinkets that Madame Linders might once have possessed had been parted with long before her death; and anything else that seemed likely to produce money had been sold afterwards. Here were nothing but linen clothes, which, as Sœur Lucie had hinted, might be made available for Madelon; a shawl, and a cloak of an old-fashioned pattern, a few worn English books, with the name "Magdalen Moore" written on the fly-leaf, at which Madelon looked curiously; a half-empty work-box, and two or three gowns. Among these last was a well-worn black silk, lying almost at the bottom of the trunk; and Madelon, taking it out, unfolded it with some satisfaction at the thought of seeing it transformed into a garment for herself. As she did so, she perceived that some things had been left in the pocket. It had probably been the last gown worn by Madame Linders, and after her death, in the hurry and confusion that had attended the packing away of her things, under Monsieur Linders' superintendence, it had been put away with the rest without examination.

A cambric handkerchief was the first thing Madelon pulled out, and, as she did so, a folded paper fluttered on to the ground. She picked it up, and took it to the window to examine it. It was the fragment of a half-burnt letter, a half sheet of foreign paper closely written in a small, clear hand; but only a fragment, for there was neither beginning nor ending. It was in English, but Madelon remembered enough of the language to make out the meaning, and this was what she read in the fading light.

It began abruptly thus:

". . . . cannot come to me, and that I must not come to you, that it would do no good, and that M. Linders would not like it. Well, I must submit, I suppose, but if you could imagine, Magdalen, how I long to see your face,

to hear your voice again! It is hard to be parted for so long, and I weary, oh, how I weary for you sometimes. To think that you are unhappy, and that I cannot comfort you; that you also sometimes wish for me, and that I cannot come to you—all this seems at times very hard to bear. I think sometimes that to die for those we love would be too easy a thing; to suffer for them and with them—would not that be better? And I do suffer with you in my heart—do you not believe it? But of what good is it? it cannot remove one pang or lighten your burden for a single moment. This is folly, you will say; well, perhaps it is; you know I like to be sentimental sometimes, and I am in just such a mood to-night. Is it folly, too, to say, that after all the years since we parted, I still miss you? and yet so it is. Sometimes sitting by the fire of an evening, or looking out at the twilight garden, I seem to hear a voice and a step, and half expect to see my pretty Maud—you tell me you are altered, but I cannot realize it, and yet, of course, you must be; we are both growing old women now—we two girls will never meet again. Don't laugh at me if I tell you a dream I had last night; I dreamt that . . ." Below these words the page had been destroyed, but there was more writing on the other side, and Madelon read on:

". . . no doubt tired of all this about my love and regrets and sympathy, and you have heard it all before, have you not? Only believe it, Magdalen, for it comes from my heart. I think sometimes from your letters that you doubt it, that you doubt me; never do that—trust me when I say that my love for you is a part of myself, that can only end with life and consciousness. Well, let us talk of something else. I am so glad to hear that your baby thrives; it was good of you to wish to give it my name, but your husband was quite right in saying it should be called Madeleine after you, and I shall love it all the better. I already feel as if I had a possession in it, and if big Maud will not come to me, why then I shall have to put up with little Maud, and insist on her coming to pay me a visit some day. But you must come too, Magdalen; your room is all ready for you, it has been prepared ever since I came into this house, and if I could see your baby in the little empty bed in my nurs-

ery I think it would take away some of the heartache that looking at it gives me. I am writing a dismal letter instead of a cheery one, such as I ought to send you in your solitude; but the rain it is raining, and the wind it is blowing, and when all looks so gray and forlorn outside, one is apt to be haunted by the sound of small feet and chattering voices; you also, do you not know what that is? I am alone too, to-day, for Hor . . ."

Here the sentence broke off abruptly; the edges of the paper were all charred and brown; one could fancy that the letter had been condemned to the flames, and then that this page had been rescued, as if the possessor could not bear to part with all the loving words.

It was like a sigh from the past. Still holding the paper in her hand, Madelon leant her head against the window-frame and looked out. The sun had set, the trees were blowing about, black against the clear pale yellow of the evening sky, overhead stars were shining faintly here and there, the wind was sighing and scattering the faint-scented petals of the over-blown roses. Half unconsciously, Madelon felt that the scene, the hour, were in harmony with the pathos of the brown, faded words, like a chord struck in unison with the key-note of a mournful song. As she gazed, the tears began to gather in her eyes; she tried to read the letter again, and the big drops fell on the paper, already stained with other tears that had been dried ever so many years ago. But it was already too dark, she could hardly see the words; she laid the paper down and began to cry.

It was not the first part of the letter that moved her so much, though there were something in her that responded to the devoted, loving words; but she had not the key to their meaning. She knew nothing of her mother's life, nor of her causes for unhappiness; and for the moment she did not draw the inferences that to an older and more experienced person would have been at once obvious. It was the allusion to herself that was making Madelon cry with a tender little self-pity. The child was so weary of the convent, was feeling so friendless and so homeless just then, that this mention of the little empty bed that sometime and somewhere had been prepared and waiting to receive her, awoke

in her quite a new longing, such as she had never had before, for a home and a mother, and kind protection and care, like other children. When at last she folded the letter up, it was to put it carefully away in the little box that contained her few treasures. It belonged to a life in which she somehow felt she had some part, though it lay below the horizon of her own memories and consciousness.

Only then, as Madelon prepared to put back the things that she had taken out of the trunk, did it occur to her to look if anything else remained in the pocket of the black silk gown. There was not much—only a half-used pencil a small key, and a faded red silk netted purse. There was money in this last—at one end a few sous and about six francs in silver, at the other twenty francs in gold.

CHAPTER X.

Out of the Convent.

"I THINK you might very well come down to vespers to night, *mon enfant*," said Sœur Lucie one evening about a week later.

"To-night!" said Madelon, starting.

"Yes; why not? You are quite well and strong enough now, and we must set to work again. I think you have been idle long enough, and we can't begin better than by your coming to chapel this evening."

Madelon was silent and dismayed. Ever since she had found the money her project of flight had become a question of time only, and it was precisely this hour of vespers she had fixed on as the only one possible for her escape: the nuns would all be in the chapel, and, once outside the convent, the increasing darkness would favor her.

"Ah, not to-night, Sœur Lucie, please," she said, in a faltering voice; "I—I am tired—I have been in the garden all the afternoon—that is, I am not tired, but I don't want to come down to night."

"Well, I will let you off this one evening," said Sœur Lucie, good-naturedly; "though you used to be fond of coming to vespers, and certainly I don't think you can be very tired with sitting in the garden. However, we must begin work regularly to-morrow; so you had better go to bed at once, and get well rested. Good night, *ma petite*."

"Good night," said Madelon; and then, as Sœur Lucie turned to leave the room, she felt a sudden pang of self-reproach. She was deceiving the good-humored, simple little sister, who had been kind to her after her own fashion; and she was going away, and would never see her any more. She thought she would like to have one more kind word from her, as she could not wish her good-bye.

"Do you love me, Sœur Lucie?" she said, flinging her arms round her neck.

"To be sure, *mon enfant*," answers Sœur Lucie, with some astonishment; then, hastening to add the qualifying clause by which so many worthy people take care to proclaim that their love is human, and not divine, "that is, when you are good, you know, and do what you are told."

"Ah," said Madelon, relaxing her hold, "then if I were to do something you thought very naughty, you would not love me any more?"

"Indeed, I don't know. You are not going to be naughty, I hope?" answered the nun; "but I can't wait any longer now. Make haste, and go to bed quietly."

She hurried out of the room as she spoke. Madelon listened till the sound of her footsteps died away; and then, without a moment's further pause or hesitation, began putting together a few things into a small bundle. She had no time to waste in vain regrets: what she had to do must be done quickly, or not at all. A dozen windows overlooked the garden, and presently the nuns would be returning to their cells, and her chances would be over. Even now it was possible that one or another might have been detained from the chapel, but that she must risk; better that, she thought, than to wait till later, when a prolonged vigil or a wakeful sister might be the cause of frustrating all her hopes and plans. She had no fear of her flight being discovered before the morning. Since her illness she had always gone to bed early, and Sœur Lucie never did anything more than put her head in at the door, on her way to her own room, which was in a different part of the building, to see that all was dark and quiet; and if Madelon did not speak, would go away at once, satisfied that she was asleep.

The chapel bell was still ringing as she went swiftly about her few preparations, but it had ceased by the time the small bundle was made up, and Madelon, in her hat and cloak, stood ready to depart. She had laid all her plans in her own mind, and knew exactly what she meant to do. She had decided that she would walk to Chaudfontaine; she knew that she had only to follow the high-road to get there, and the distance she thought could not be very great,

for she remembered having once walked it with her father years ago. To be sure she had been very tired, but she had been only a little girl then, and could do much better now; and it appeared to her this would be simpler and better than going into Liége to find the railway-station, of whose situation she had no very distinct idea, and where she might have to wait all night for a train, thus doubling her chances of detection. She would rather walk the five or six miles to Chaudfontaine during the night, and take the first morning train to Pepinster and Spa; once there, there could of course be no further difficulties.

She stood at the window now, ready to take the first step. She had on the old black silk gown, in which Sœur Lucie's skilful fingers had already made the necessary alterations, a black cloth cloak, and a little round hat and veil. She had grown a good deal during her illness, and the idea of height was aided by the straight black skirt, which, reaching to her ankles, gave her a quaint, old-fashioned air. She had her bundle on her arm, but there was still a moment of irresolution, as she looked for the last time round the little whitewashed room. It appeared to her that she was going to do something so dreadfully naughty. Our Madelon had not lived so long in a convent atmosphere without imbibing some of the convent ideas and opinions, and she was aware that in the eyes of the nuns there were few offences so heinous as that which she was going to commit. "But I am not a nun yet," thinks the poor child, clasping and unclasping her hands in her perplexity, and struggling with the conscience-stricken sense of naughtiness, which threatened at this last moment to overpower all her foregone conclusions, and disconcert her in spite of herself—"I am not a nun yet, so it cannot be so very wrong in me; and then there is Monsieur Horace—" and with the thought of him all Madelon's courage returned. The rush of associations linking his name with a hundred aspirations, hopes, plans, which had become a habit of mind with her, revived in full force, and with these came a sudden realization of the imminent nature of the present opportunity, which, if lost, might never return.

The next moment she had dropped her bundle on the

flower-bed below, and was scrambling out of the low window, clinging to the window-sill, catching hold of tough stems and pliant branches, crashing down through twigs, and leaves, and flowers, on to the ground beneath. Could these convent-trained vines and roses have known what daring little culprit was amongst them, would they have cried aloud for aid, I wonder, stretching out thorny sprays, and twining tendrils, to catch and detain her prisoner?—or would they not rather, in their sweet liberty of air, and dew, and sunshine, have done their best to help forward this poor little captive in her flight, aiding her in her descent, and shielding her from all prying eyes with their leafy branches, their interlacing sprays of red buds, and soft, faint flowers?

But they paid no heed one way or the other, and Madelon, with not a few scratches on her hands, and more than one rent in her frock, was safely on the ground. It was all the work of a moment; in another she had caught up her bundle, and was darting over the lawn, across the twilight garden, as if the whole sisterhood were in pursuit. Hardly knowing how she did it, she clambered up the wall, through the big westeria, reached the top, and slipping, sliding, found herself in the pathway running round the outside, scratched, bruised, and breathless, but without the walls, and so far free, at any rate. Months afterward she found some withered lilac-blossoms lodged among the ribbons of her hat; how they recalled to her the moment of that desperate rush and clamber, the faint, dewy scent of the flowers, which she noticed even then, the rustle and crash of the branches, which startled her as with the sound of pursuing footsteps.

Once outside, she paused for a moment to take breath, and be certain that no one was following her. All was quiet, and in the stillness she could hear, as once before, the voices of the nuns singing in the chapel. Picking up her bundle again, she walked quickly away, along the little weed-grown path at the back of the building, down the slope of the ploughed field, up which she had come with Horace Graham two years and a half ago. In thinking over her journey beforehand, she had decided that it would be unwise to be walking along the high-road while there was still any daylight left, and that she would hide herself

somewhere till it should be quite dark, before setting out on her walk to Chaudfontaine. So, as soon as she had reached the bottom of the unsheltered slope, she looked about for a place of refuge. She found it in a clump of trees and bushes growing by the road-side; and creeping in among them, our Madelon's slim little figure was very well concealed among the shadows from any passer-by. Eight o'clock had struck as she left the convent. "I will wait till nine," she resolved. "An hour will not be very long, and it will be quite dark by that time." And so she did wait, with the most determined impatient patience, through an hour that seemed as if it would never end, while the darkness fell, and passing footsteps became more and more rare. At last she heard the shrill-toned convent clock strike nine, and coming out of her place of concealment, she began her journey in earnest.

It was a dark, still, cloudy night. Above was the black mass of the convent dimly defined against the sullen sky; she took one glance at it before she bade it farewell; all was silent, not a light shone from its windows, not a tree waved above the surrounding walls. Behind her hung the great cloud of smoke that ever darkens over the city of Liége. Here and there a sudden glare illuminated the gloom of the surrounding hills; it came from the furnaces of the great iron-foundries; before her stretched the dusky road, between hedges and trees and scattered houses, soon lost in the obscurity beyond. Not a footstep could be heard, not a leaf rustled as Madelon and her bundle emerged from their hiding-place; but the child felt no alarm at the silence and solitude—the darkness and loneliness of the road could not frighten her. Indeed she was naturally of so courageous a temperament, and just then, through joy and hope, of so brave a spirit, that it would have been only a very real and present danger that could have alarmed her, and she did not even dream of imaginary ones. She almost danced as she went along, she felt so free and happy. "How glad I am to have quitted the convent," she thought to herself; "how *triste* it was, how dismal! How can people exist who always live there? They do not live, I think, they seem half dead already. Aunt Thérèse, how mourn-

ful and cold she always looked; she never smiled, she hardly ever spoke; she was not alive as other people are. Sœur Lucie told me that she would be a glorious saint in Heaven, and ten thousand times more happy than if she had not lived in the convent; how does Sœur Lucie know, I wonder? If so, she must have been glad to die—it was, perhaps, for that, that she made herself so miserable, that she might not dread death when it came; but that seems to me a very foolish way of spending one's life. And if to be like Aunt Thérèse was to be a saint, I am sure all the nuns were not so. How they used to chatter and quarrel sometimes; Sœur Marie would hardly speak to Sœur Lucie for a week, I remember, because she said Sœur Lucie had made Aunt Thérèse give her the best piece of embroidery to do, after it had been promised to her. I do not believe that; I love Sœur Lucie, she was always kind to me, and never quarrelled with any one. Oh! even if I had not made that promise to papa, I could never, never, have been a nun; I have done well in running away."

She walked on for a long time, her thoughts running on the scenes she had left behind, on the last two years of her life; she had no remorse now, no regrets at their having come to an end. To our lively, independent, excitable Madelon, they had, as we know, been years of restraint, of penance, of utter weariness; and never, perhaps, had she felt them to be so more keenly than in these first moments of her release. But she would have found them harder still without the memory of Monsieur Horace, and her promise to him, to fill her heart and imagination, and her thoughts reverted to him now; how, when she had made his fortune, she would take it all to him; how he would look, what he would say. This was a little picture the child was never weary of imagining to herself. She filled it in with a hundred different backgrounds, to suit the fancy of the moment; she tinted it with the brightest colors. Out in the vague future, into which no one can venture to look without some point on which to rest the mind, this little scene had gradually become at once the end of her present hopes, the beginning of another life, of which, indeed, she knew nothing, but that it lay in a sort of luminous haze of

success and happiness. She never doubted she would attain it; it was not an affair of the imagination only, it was to be a most certain reality; she had arranged it all in those long weeks gone by, and now that the beginning was actually made, she was ready to look at it from the most practical point of view. Taking out her little purse, she began to count her money for at least the fiftieth time, as she walked along in the darkness.

"I have here twenty-six francs," she said to herself; "out of these, I must pay my journey to Spa. Why should I not go to Spa on foot? It cannot be a very long way; I remember that papa sometimes went backwards and forwards twice in the day from Chaudfontaine. I have already come a great way, and I am not in the least fatigued. If I could do that, I should save a great deal of money—not that I am afraid I shall not have plenty without that; ten francs would be sufficient, but it will be perhaps safer if I can keep fifteen. Let me see; I must pay for my room at Spa. I wonder whether Madame Bertrand is still the landlady at the Hôtel de Madrid. Also I must have some breakfast and some dinner; all this, however, will not cost me ten francs. I imagine I could still take the train from Chaudfontaine to Spa. Ah, I am getting very tired; I wonder if I have much further to go. I think I must rest a little while."

Madelon, in fact, but lately recovered from her fever, and for many months unused to much exercise, was in no sort of condition for a six or seven miles' walk. She had started with great courage, but it seemed to her that she had already been on her journey quite an indefinite length of time, and that she must be near the end, while in fact she had only accomplished half the distance. She would sit down for a short time, she thought, and then the rest would soon be accomplished, and she looked about for a seat of some kind. The road hitherto could hardly have been called lonely, for houses had been scattered on either side, and part of the way had led through a large village, where, from some uncurtained window, from some café or restaurant, long gleams of light had shot across the road, revealing for an instant the little figure passing swiftly along, glad

to hide again in the obscurity beyond. But all this was left behind now, and as far as she could make out, she was quite in the open country, though in the darkness she could hardly distinguish objects three yards off. She found a big stone however, before long, and sitting down on it, leaning her head against a tree, in five minutes the child was soundly asleep.

How long she slept she never knew. Tired out, her repose was at first profound and unconscious; but presently it began to be haunted by confused dreams, in which past, present, and future were mingled together. She dreamt that she was wandering in some immense vaulted hall, where she had never been before, and which yet resembled the refectory of the convent; for long tables were spread as for the evening meal, and in the twilight, black-robed nuns whose faces she could never see, were gliding to and fro. And then, how or why she did not know, they were no longer the deal tables of the convent, with their coarse white cloths and earthenware plates, but the long green tables of the Kursaal, with Aunt Thérèse as croupier, and all the nuns pushing and raking the piles of money backwards and forwards. She was among them, and it seemed to her she had just won a great heap of gold; but when she tried to get it, Aunt Thérèse, in the character of croupier, refused to let her touch it. "It is mine; is it not, papa?" she cried to somebody standing at her side; and then looking up, saw it was Monsieur Horace; he did not speak, but gazing at her a moment, shook his head, and moved away slowly into the gloom. And then the nuns and Aunt Thérèse also seemed to vanish, and she was left alone with the tables and the money, in the midst of which lay a long figure covered with a sheet, as she had seen her father the night that he had died. She did not think of that, however, but ran eagerly up to the table to take her winnings, when the figure moved, a hand was put out to seize the gold, and the sheet falling off, Madelon recognized her dead father's face.

With a shriek she awoke, and sprang up, shivering and trembling with cold and fright—all the terrors of the night suddenly come upon her. She looked round; all was as it

had been when she went to sleep; the lonely road, the dark fields, the trees and hedges; but a breeze had sprung up before the dawn, and was rustling the leaves and branches; overhead a star or two was shining in dark rifts, and in the east a melancholy waning moon was slowly rising, half obscured by scattered clouds. With a sudden impulse, born of an urgent sense of utter loneliness and helplessness, the child fell on her knees and repeated an Ave Maria; the clouds drifted away, and the low moon shone out between the trees with a pale glow, that to our convent-taught Madelon seemed suddenly to irradiate and transfigure the night with a glory not of earth. Never in after years did she, in church or picture-gallery, come across glorified Madonna, or saint floating in ethereal spaces, without the memory returning to her of a silent road, dark, rustling trees, a midnight sky swept with clouds, and then a vision, as it were, of light and hope, giving new strength and courage to one little terrified heart.

Madelon started on her journey with renewed energy, but she hardly knew how she got through the miles that remained. The moon rose higher and higher, the road bordered with poplar-trees seemed to stretch before and behind into a never-ending length, as in some wearying nightmare. Madelon, in her straight, old-fashioned silk frock, her bundle on her arm, marching steadily on, looked nothing but a queer little black speck, casting a long narrow shadow, as she passed from one moonlit space to another. Ever afterwards, when she looked back upon that night, the whole seemed like some perplexed, struggling dream, of which the waking reality appeared less vivid than the visions that had haunted her sleep. Perhaps she would have broken down altogether but for the friendly hints of the coming day that presently began to show themselves. There came a moment when the night grew more silent, and the breeze more chilly, and the surrounding world more dim and fantastic in the uncertain moonlight; and then the shadows began to waver and grow confused, long streaks of light showed themselves in the east, the moon grew fainter in the brightening sky, the birds began to chirp and twitter in every tree and bush. The night had vanished, and the horizon was all aglow with

the ruddy light of a new day, when Madelon turned the last bend of the road, and saw before her the white cottages, the big hotel, the stream and hills of Chaudfontaine.

CHAPTER XI.

The Countess G——.

No one was yet stirring in the little village, which, scarcely emerged from the early twilight, lay still and silent, except for the ceaseless, monotonous clang of the forges. Madelon was tired out; she knew it was too early for any train to start for Spa, and nothing better occurred to her than to sit down and rest once more in a sheltered corner among some bushes under a big hawthorn-tree growing on the bank of the river; and in a few minutes she was again sound asleep, while the mass of snowy blossoms above her head grew rosy in the sunlight.

It was broad daylight when she awoke again, and sat up rubbing her eyes, and feeling very chilly, and stiff, and sleepy, but with a quickly succeeding delight in the bright May morning, a joyous sense of escape and freedom, of all that she had accomplished already, and was going to accomplish on this day to which she had looked forward so long. Everything looked gold and blue in the early sunlight; the river danced and sparkled, the poplar-trees were now green, now silvery-gray, as they waved about in the breeze; the country people were passing along the road, laughing and chattering gaily in their queer *patois*. The dark night seemed to have vanished into indefinite remoteness, like some incongruous dream, which, on waking, one recalls with difficulty and wonder, in the midst of bright familiar surroundings. The two years of convent life, too, seemed to be slipping out of little Madelon's existence, as if they had never been; she could almost fancy she had been sleeping all these months, and had awakened to find all the same—ah! no, not quite the same. Madelon had a sharp little pang of grief as she thought of her father, and then a glad

throb of joy as she thought of Monsieur Horace—and then she suddenly discovered that she was horribly hungry, and, jumping up, she began to walk towards the village.

Not fifty yards from where she had been sleeping stood the hotel where she had so often stayed, and where she had first met Horace Graham. There, too, everything was stirring and awakening into activity—shutters being thrown back, windows opened, the sunny court-yard swept out. Madelon stood still for a moment looking on. She wondered whether her old friend, Mademoiselle Cécile, was still there; she thought it would be very pleasant to go in and see her, and have some breakfast in the big *salle-à-manger*, with the pink and yellow paper roses, and long rows of windows looking out into the court-yard and garden. But then, she further reflected, breakfasting at a hotel might probably cost a great deal of money, and she had so little money to spare; so that on the whole it might be better to see what she could find in a shop, and she walked quickly up the village street. Chaudfontaine contains none of the luxuries, and as few as possible of the necessaries of life, which are for the most part supplied from Liége; but sour bread is not unknown there, and Madelon having procured a great, dark tough hunch for her sous, turned back towards the hotel. She stood outside the iron-railing, eating her bread, and watching what was going on inside; the stir and small bustle had a positive fascination for her, after her months of seclusion in the convent. It brought back her old life with the strangest vividness, joining on the present with the past which had been so happy; it was as if she had been suddenly brought back into air and light after long years of darkness and silence. Through the open door of the hotel she could see the shadowy green of the garden beyond. Was the swing in which she had so often sat for hours still there? The windows of the salon were open too, and there were the old pictures on the wall, the piano just where it used to stand, and a short, stout figure, in skirt and camisole, moving about, who might be Mademoiselle Cécile herself. Presently some children came running out into the court-yard, with shining hair and faces, and clean white pinafores, fresh out of the nurse's hands. Madelon looked at

them with a sudden sense of having grown much older than she used to be—almost grown up, compared to these small things. She had been no bigger than that when she had first seen Monsieur Horace. She tried to recall their first meeting, but in truth she could not remember much about it; it was so long ago, and succeeding visits had so nearly effaced the remembrance of that early time, that it was rather the shadowy memory of a memory, than the reality itself, that came back to her mind.

Madelon had long finished her breakfast, but, busy with these recollections, was still lingering outside the court-yard, when a gentleman and lady came out of the hotel and walked down towards the gate. The gentleman was stout, black-haired, red-faced, and good-humored-looking; the lady elderly, thin, and freckled, with a much tumbled silk gown, and frizzy, sandy hair, under a black net bonnet, adorned with many artificial flowers. In all our Madelon's reminiscences of the past, these two figures assuredly had no place, and yet this was by no means the first time they had met at this very hotel. The lady was the Countess G——, with whom one memorable evening Madelon had had a grand fight over a roulette board; the gentleman was Horace Graham's *quondam* fellow-traveller, the Countess' old admirer, and now her husband.

They were talking as they came together down the court-yard, and Madelon caught the last words of their conversation.

"Adieu, *mon ami*," cried the lady, as they approached the gate; "I shall rejoin you this afternoon at Liége."

"And by the earliest train possible, I beg of you," answered the other. "I may find it necessary to go on to Brussels this evening."

"By the earliest train possible, *mon ami*. Adieu, then, —*au revoir*."

"*Au revoir, ma chérie*," answered the gentleman, turning back to the hotel, but pausing before he had taken a dozen steps.

"*Ma chérie*, you will not forget my business at Madame Bertrand's?"

"But no, *mon ami*, it shall be attended to without fail."

"*Ma chérie—*"

"*Mon ami—*"

"You must hasten, or you will miss the train."

"I go, I go," cried the Countess, waving her parasol in token of farewell, and hurrying out of the gateway. These last words aroused Madelon also. In hearing strange voices talking what seemed some familiar, half-forgotten tongue, she had almost forgotten the train; but she started up now from where she had been half standing, half leaning, and followed the Countess across the bridge into the railway-station. Indeed she had only just time to take her ticket, before the train for Spa came rushing up with slackening speed into the station. There were few passengers either coming or going at this early hour, but Madelon's heart gave a great jump as she saw two black-robed figures get out of one of the carriages and come towards her. In another moment she saw they were Sœurs de Charité, with a dress quite different from that worn by the nuns; but the imaginary alarm suggested very real causes of fear, which somehow had almost slipped from her mind since the first hours of her escape from the convent. In her new, glad sense of freedom, she had quite forgotten that the hour had long since arrived when her flight must most certainly be discovered, and that there were, after all, still only six miles of road between her and her old life; and it was with quite a newly-awakened dread that even now unfriendly eyes might be watching her from some one of the carriage windows, that she jumped hastily into the nearest compartment she could find. It was not empty, however, for the Countess, who had preceded her across the bridge had already taken her place, and was arranging her flounces in one corner. She looked up astounded at Madelon's somewhat precipitate entrance; and as the train moved off, she treated her small companion to a most unceremonious stare, which took in every detail of her personal appearance.

"Are you travelling alone?" she asked, at length, abruptly.

"Yes, madame," said Madelon, getting rather red. She had resented the stare, and did not want to be talked to; her one idea now was to get to Spa unnoticed. But she had ill-

chosen her travelling companion—the Countess was a lady whose impertinent curiosity was rarely baffled.

"What! quite alone? Is there nobody at all with you?"

"No, madame."

"But that is very extraordinary, and not at all the thing for a young person of your age. What makes you go about all by yourself?"

"I—I have no one to go with me," faltered Madelon, getting more and more hot and uncomfortable.

"But that is very strange, and, as one may say, very improper; have you no friends?"

"Yes—no," began Madelon; but at that moment, with a shriek, the train entered a tunnel, and the sudden noise and darkness put a stop to the conversation for a time. The Countess began again presently, however, as they went speeding across the next valley.

"Do you live at Chaudfontaine?" was her next inquiry.

"No," says poor Madelon, looking round despairingly, as for some means of escape; but that was hopeless, and she could only shrink further into her corner.

"And where are you going now, then?"

"I am going to Spa."

"To Spa? Ah, indeed—and what are you going to do there? Perhaps," said the Countess, more graciously, and with another glance at the shabby frock and poor little bundle, "perhaps you are going into some situation there?"

"Situation?" repeated Madelon, bewildered.

"Yes—you would make a very nice little nursery-maid, I daresay," said the Countess, with much condescension. "and, indeed, if you should be wanting any assistance in that way, you have only to apply to me; and if you can produce good credentials, I shall be most happy to assist you. I am always ready to help deserving young people."

Madelon grew red as fire. "I am not a nursery-maid," she said, with much indignation; "I don't know what you mean, and you have no right to ask me so many questions—I will not answer any more."

Another shriek and another tunnel; when they once more emerged into daylight, Madelon had retreated into that corner of the carriage remotest from the Countess, who,

for her part, showed some wisdom, perhaps, in making no attempt to resume the conversation.

At Pepinster they changed trains; and here Madelon found an empty carriage, where, without disturbance, she might sit and congratulate herself on having accomplished this first step in her journey. Indeed, this seemed to her so great a success, that she felt nothing but hope as she sat curled up in a corner, only wishing vaguely, from time to time, that her head would not ache so much, and that she did not feel so very, very tired. She had a great confidence in the swiftness of the train, which was every moment increasing the distance between herself and Liége, and so, as she thought, lessening the chances of her being discovered in case of pursuit; and yet, when it stopped at length at the well-remembered Spa station, she lingered a moment in the carriage, feeling as if it were a friendly place of refuge she was leaving, to face unknown dangers in the outer world.

No one noticed her, however, as she slowly alighted and looked about her. There were, as we have said, but few passengers at this early hour, and the platform was already nearly deserted. At a little distance she could see Madame la Comtesse and her flounces walking briskly away; on one side was an English family of the received type, wrangling with porters and omnibus-drivers in the midst of their luggage; on the other, an invalid Russian wrapped to the nose in furs, leaning on his valet's arm; in the foreground, a party of gay Liégeois, come over for a day's amusement. No one looked at our poor little Madelon, as, half-bewildered, she stood for a moment on the platform, her bundle on her arm, her veil pulled down over her face; one after the other they vanished, and then she too followed, out into the tree-bordered road, with the familiar hills on either side, sheltering the little gay white town. The day had changed within the last hour, the sunshine was gone, and in its place was a gray, lowering sky. Madelon shivered as she walked along; her head ached more and more; she wondered what it was that made her feel so tired and weak, and then she remembered that she had been ill for a long time, and that she had been up all night. "I will ask Madame Bertrand to let me lie down and go to sleep," she thought, "before I go to th

Redoute, and then I shall be all right." She walked on as fast as she could, so as to arrive sooner at the hotel: she remembered its situation perfectly, in the Place Royale, not far from the stand where the band used to play every evening; and there it was at last, all unchanged since she had last seen it three years ago, and with "Hôtel de Madrid" shining in big gold letters above the door.

Every one who knows Spa, knows the Place Royale, with its broad walks and rows of trees, leading from the shady avenues of the Promenade à Sept Heures at the one end, to the winding street with its gay shops at the other. The Hôtel de Madrid was situated about half-way down the Place, and, as compared with the great hotels of Spa, it was small, mean, and third-rate, little frequented therefore by the better class of visitors, and with no particular recommendation beyond its situation on the Place Royale, its cheap terms, and its excellent landlady. M. Linders, whose means did not always admit of reckless expenditure, and whose credit was not wholly unlimited, had gone there two or three times, when visiting Spa to retrieve fallen fortunes; and the first time he had taken Madelon with him, she and Madame Bertrand had become such fast friends that, for his child's sake, he never afterwards went anywhere else. Madelon had the most lively, pleasant recollections of the stout motherly landlady, whose store of bonbons and confitures had been absolutely endless. Of all her friends in this class, Madame Bertrand had been the one to whom she had most attached herself, and now it was almost with the feeling of finding herself at home that she saw the hotel before her.

The door stood open, and she went into the small hall, or rather passage, which ran through the house, ending in another door, which, also open, afforded a green view of many currant and gooseberry bushes in Madame Bertrand's garden. To the right was the staircase, to the left the *salle-à-manger*, a low room with two windows looking on to the Place, and furnished with half-a-dozen small round tables, for the hotel was of too unpretentious a nature to aspire to a *table-d'hôte;* the floor lacked polish, and the furniture was shabby, yet the room had a friendly look to our home-

less Madelon, as a frequent resting-place in such wanderings to and fro as had been hers in former years. She went in. A man was sitting at one of the tables, a tall bottle of red wine at his side, and a dish of cutlets before him, eating his late *déjeûner*, and reading a newspaper; while a waiter moved about, arranging knives and forks, table-napkins and *pistolets*, with occasional pauses for such glimpses of the outer world as could be obtained through the muslin curtains hanging before the somewhat dingy windows.

"Is Madame Bertrand at home?" asked Madelon, coming up to him.

The man stared down at the shabbily dressed little figure before him, glanced at the bundle hanging on her arm, and then answered civilly enough that Madame Bertrand was not at home. Did Mademoiselle want anything?

"I wanted to speak to Madame Bertrand," answered Madelon rather piteously; "will she be back soon, do you think? When can I see her?"

"*Eh, je n'en sais rien*," said the man. "If Mademoiselle wants to see her, she had better call again—or she can leave a message," and he went on laying the tables.

Madelon sat down despondingly on a chair near the door, hardly knowing what to do next. It was the first check in the carrying out of her little programme, a programme so neatly arranged, but with this defect, mainly arising from inexperience, that it had made no sort of allowance for unforeseen circumstances—and yet of such so many were likely to arise. She had quite settled in her own mind what she was going to say to Madame Bertrand, and also what Madame Bertrand would say to her, but she had not provided for this other contingency of not finding her at all. She sat and considered for a minute. Two or three men came in laughing and talking, and stared in her face as they passed by and called for what they wanted. She began to feel uncomfortable; she could not stay there till Madame Bertrand returned; what if she were to go to the Redoute first, and then return to the hotel? Yes, that would be the best plan; if only she had not felt so very tired, with such aching limbs and head; the sight and smell of

the meat and wine made her feel almost faint. However, that could not be helped, she must do the best she could. She went up to the waiter again. "I must go now," she said, "but I will come back presently to see Madame Bertrand; may I leave these things here?" and she held up her bundle.

"Mademoiselle wants a room—or is it something for Madame?" said the man, perplexed at this strange little visitor, who was wholly out of the range of his experience.

"No, no, it is mine," said Madelon; "if I might leave it here—"

The waiter set down the tray he was holding, and left the room followed by Madelon. "Mademoiselle Henriette!" he cried.

"Mademoiselle Henriette is in the garden," answered a shrill voice from above; and at the same moment a trim little figure appeared from among the currant and gooseberry bushes, and came in at the open door leading into the passage.

"Does any one want me?" she cried.

"Pardon, Madame," said Madelon, coming forward to tell her little story, while the waiter returned to his plates and dishes, "I wanted to see Madame Bertrand, but they say she is out, and that I must return later; might I leave my things here for a little while till I come back?"

"Do you want a room, Mademoiselle?" said the other; "I regret to say that the hotel is quite full; we have not a single bed at your disposal."

"Ah, what shall I do? what do you think would be best?" said poor Madelon, piteously, suddenly breaking down in the grown-up part she had been half unconsciously acting, and ready to burst into tears. Things were not turning out at all as she had wished or intended. "I did want a room, but I thought I should have found Madame Bertrand, and she would have helped me; I don't know what to do now."

"Do you know my aunt? I am Madame Bertrand's niece," says Mademoiselle Henriette in explanation. "She will not be in just yet, but if you like to wait in here a little while, you can do so, or you can return by-and-by."

She opened the door of a small parlor as she spoke, and stood aside for Madelon to enter. A little faded room, with a high desk standing in the window, gaudy ornaments on the mantel-piece, a worn Utrecht velvet sofa, and a semicircle of worsted-work chairs—not much in it all to awaken enthusi asm, one would think, and yet, as Madelon came in, she for got disappointment, and fatigue, and everything else for a moment, in a glad recognition of well-remembered objects.

"It is not a bit altered," she cried, quite joyfully, turning to Mademoiselle Henriette as she spoke.

"You have been here before then," says Mademoiselle, looking curiously at the child, and seeing for the first time, in the clearer light of the room, what a child she was.

"Yes," answered Madelon, "I used to come here very often; we liked coming, because Madame Bertrand was so kind. I know she will be glad to see me again—ah!" she cried, breaking off in the middle of her sentence, "there is the little china dog I used to play with, and the bonbonnière with the flowers painted on the top—ah, and my little glass—do you know, Madame used always let me drink out of that glass when I had supper with her—but you were not here, then, Mademoiselle."

"That is true, I have only been with my aunt about six months; she is growing old, and wants some one to help her," answered Mademoiselle Henriette, a most brisk, capable-looking little personage, "but I daresay she will recollect you. Are you all alone. Have you come far to-day?"

"Not very far," said Madelon, coloring up, and suddenly recalled to the present. "I think, please, I will leave my things here now, and come back presently."

"I think you had better stay here quietly and rest; you look very tired," said Mademoiselle kindly; and indeed as the glow faded from her cheeks, Madelon showed a most colorless little face, with heavy eyelids, that seemed as if they could hardly open.

"No, I would rather go out now," she answered; "I can rest afterwards."

Indeed, tired as she felt, she had changed her mind, thinking that if she stayed now, it would be hard to set off again by-and-by, and she was determined to get her busi-

ness done to-day—she had a morbid dread, too, of questions from strangers, after her experience with the Countess.

"I *must* go out," she repeated; "but I will come back again, and then perhaps Madame Bertrand will have come in, and will tell me where I can sleep to-night."

Mademoiselle Henriette had neither time nor sufficient interest in the child to contest the point further; and Madlon, having safely deposited her bundle in a corner of the sofa, departed on her errand.

CHAPTER XII.

What Madelon did at the Redoute.

AND so more than one half of Madelon's troubles are over, and she is really approaching the moment so looked and longed for, for which so much has been dared and risked! Ah, is it so that our dearest hopes get fulfilled? In after years Madelon always looked back upon the remainder of that day, as upon the previous night, as a sort of horrible nightmare, through which she struggled more and more painfully—to what awakening we shall presently see. The golden morning had faded into a gray drizzle; the mist hung upon the hills, hiding their tops, and there were low heavy clouds, presaging an afternoon of more decided rain. The golden hope, too, that had so sustained and cheered our Madelon, seemed to have suddenly faded also; and in its place was that ever-increasing sense of utter weariness and aching limbs, which seemed as if it would overpower her before she had gone a dozen yards from the house. She went on bravely, however, trying to brace herself with the consciousness of a great purpose, very near its fulfilment now; but somehow she seemed almost to have forgotten what it was, or why she had ever formed it. Her keenest feeling at that moment was, perhaps, that expressed by the quick, furtive glance with which she looked round from time to time, as some following footstep made itself heard behind her. The sudden alarm at Chaudfontaine had given rise to a haunting dread, which she was unable to shake off, though even that was rather a vague sensation than a well-defined, reasonable fear.

Still she kept on her way, strong in the strength of a resolution that had so taken possession of all the deepest feelings and affections of a most ardent little nature, that

nothing but absolute physical inability could have held her back from keeping to it now. It was perhaps well for her, however, that with her childish pleasure in planning every detail, she had arranged everything beforehand with such minuteness, that she had no need to reflect now as to what she had to do. She had only to go on mechanically, and indeed she seemed to have no power of reflection left in her at all, as she walked slowly up the street, past the gay shops, where, a happy, chattering little girl, she had so often lingered with her father, to choose some pretty trifle. Almost without thinking, so familiar was the road, did she enter the Redoute, and ascend the wide staircase; and then at last she feels a thrill as she sees before her the big salons that she has so often revisited in her dreams, with their gilding, and mirrors, and velvet, that she loves so well, and with which some of her happiest hours are associated—sees, too, the long green tables, where Monsieur Horace's fortune is to be made, and Madelon's promise redeemed at last.

Nothing seemed so strange to our inexperienced Madelon, as that everything should be unchanged; only yesterday she had been sitting quietly in the convent garden, with long years separating her from the old life—and now it seemed but yesterday that she had been here. She went straight up to the *rouge-et-noir* table. She was familiar with both it and roulette, but of the two games *rouge-et-noir* was that which M. Linders had always most affected; and without thinking much about it, Madelon had fixed upon it as the one at which she would try her fortune. It was still early, and the tables had not long been opened, yet there was already a crowd two or three deep round them; and Madelon, hovering on the outside, had to wait some time for an opening that would enable her to approach near enough to lay down her money. It seemed so natural to be standing there watching the play—the expectant silence, the clink of the coin, the monotonous drone of the croupier, were all so familiar, that for a minute she quite forgot that she had any special object in view; and then, with one of those starts of realization with which from time to time she seemed to waken up out of some confused dream, she remembered why she was there, and what she had to do. It

was only then, that on taking out her purse with its cherished contents, so as to be ready when her turn should come, it flashed across her mind that she had intended to ask Madame Bertrand to change the two ten-franc pieces that formed her capital, into pieces of five francs, which would have given her two chances more. Well—it could not be helped now, and, after all, had she not more than enough? "*Dix francs, et je ferai fortune—dix francs, et je ferai fortune—*" The old words seemed to set themselves to a tune in Madelon's head, chiming in with the croupier's perpetual "*Rouge gagne et la couleur*," "*Rouge perd et la couleur*," while the two precious coins grew warm in the little hand that was clasped so tightly over them. She had half relasped into her dreamy state, when a woman who had been standing in front of her came pushing through the crowd. Madelon instinctively stepped forward to take her place, and roused up on finding that she was near enough to the table to lay down her money. The croupier was counting out the cards for the next stakes. Madelon waited till that turn was over, and then, leaning across the back of the chair before her, threw one of her little gold pieces on the table.

It was on the red she had staked. There was a pause as the other players made their game; Madelon's languid pulses began to flutter with a sudden interest, increasing to breathless excitement as the croupier began to deal out the cards. "*Rouge perd et la couleur*," and the poor little piece was swept away. Madelon's heart sank with a sudden pang, and then it beat faster, and her cheeks flushed, as, with a quick impulse, without a moment's hesitation, she threw her remaining ten francs on to the same spot. Another pause—another deal. "*Rouge perd et la couleur!*" She had lost again, and her last chance was gone.

Surely at the gambling-tables of Spa that day there was no more pitiful little tragedy played out than that represented by these two warm little gold coins, raked away by an indifferent croupier into a great careless heap, and carrying with them how many hopes, and ambitions, and longings—all crushed and scattered in one brief moment. Madelon half uttered a stifled cry, half made an involuntary movement forward; then, recollecting herself, shrank back, dis-

engaging herself from the crowd. The gap was immediately filled up; no one remarked, or cared for, the poor despairing child. The brave little spirit almost gave way, as Madelon, with a sudden sick feeling of faintness and giddiness, was obliged to sit down on the nearest sofa—but not quite even then. All was lost—nothing now remained for her to do in those salons, and she must not stay there, she knew; so in a minute she got up again, and made her way out of the room and down the staircase, clinging to the balustrade, blindly groping her way, as it were, till she was once more in the street.

Here the fresh air revived her a little, and she was able to consider what she should do next. Ah! what indeed was she to do, with a programme so rudely disarranged, with all her little plans and projects so shattered to fragments, that to restore them to anything like their former shape seemed hopeless? Madelon could think of nothing better to do than to go back to the hotel from which she had come. She had left all her small possessions there, and perhaps Madame Bertrand would have come in, and would be able to help her. In all the world our despairing Madelon could turn her thoughts nowhere at this crisis but to the good, unconscious Madame Bertrand, the one friend to whom she could apply, and who might perhaps be willing to assist her.

It seemed a long time before she found herself at the hotel again, and yet, in fact, it was scarcely more than half an hour since she had left it. Through the open door to the left she might have seen the waiter still busy over his plates and glasses, while the gentleman who had been breakfasting had only just finished his newspaper. But Madelon never thought of them, nor looked in that direction, indeed; with dazed eyes she was making her way along the semi-darkness of the passage to the parlor at the end, when she ran right up against some one who was coming towards her—a stout old lady with gray hair, and a little gray mustache, a very gay shawl, and a large bonnet, with primrose-colored ribbons. Madelon recognized her in an instant. "Oh! Madame Bertrand!" she cried, flinging her arms round her, "don't you know me? I am Madeleine Linders."

Madame Bertrand stepped back, a little overwhelmed by this vehement salutation, and then—

"Madeleine Linders?" she cried. "What! little Mademoiselle Madelon, who used to come here so often with her papa?"

"Yes, I am little Madelon," she answered; and indeed the sight of the kind old face, the sound of the cheery, familiar voice, made her feel quite a small Madelon again. "You have not forgotten me, have you Madame Bertrand?"

"Indeed I have not, though you have grown into such a tall young lady. But why have you not been here for such a long time? Where is your papa?"

"Ah! Madame," says Madelon, her sense of utter discouragement gaining ground again, as the first flush of pleasure at the sight of her old friend died away, "I am very unhappy. Papa died nearly three years ago, and I have been in a convent ever since, with Aunt Thérèse; but Aunt Thérèse is dead too, and they said that I was to be a nun, so I ran away."

"To be a nun!—a child like you? How could they think of such a thing?" cried the good old woman. "And you look tired out. Come in here and tell me all about it."

She drew her into the little parlor as she spoke. Mademoiselle Henriette was sitting at the high desk in the window looking on the garden, and some one else was there too, fanning herself in one of the worsted-work chairs. It was Madame la Comtesse, who had come there to settle her husband's business with Madame Bertrand. Both looked up as the landlady came into the room, half carrying, half dragging Madelon.

"*Pauvre petite! pauvre petite!*" she kept on saying, shaking and nodding her kind old head the while.

She made the child lie down on a sofa, pulled a cushion under her head, and then introduced her generally with—"They wanted to make her a nun, and so she has run away from the convent."

"Run away!" cried Mademoiselle Henriette, turning quite round. "Well, I thought there was something very queer—"

"Run away!" cried the Countess. "Dear me, but that is very naughty!"

These little speeches, coming in the midst of Madame Bertrand's effusive benevolence, seemed quite irrevelant to the matter in hand, but nevertheless imparted a sudden chill.

"Not at all naughty," said Madame, at last, rallying, and still busy about the sofa, where Madelon had passively and wearily laid back her aching little head. "It was the very best thing she could do. Nun, indeed! I have no great opinion of convents, nor nuns either, myself; an idle pack—the best of them only say more prayers than their neighbors, and there is nothing very clever in that. I could do it myself, if I had the time."

"But it is very singular," said the Countess, getting up. "That is certainly the same little girl I travelled with from Chaudfontaine this morning. I thought there was something odd about her; she would not answer any of my questions. But there is no convent at Chaudfontaine. Are you sure she is telling you the truth?"

"Of course she is, Madame—I have known her since—since she was that high," replied Madame Bertrand, with some indignation; a reply so conclusive to herself, that its want of apparent logic may be pardoned. "Tell me, *mon enfant*, where is your convent that you speak of?"

"At Liége," said Madelon, rousing and trying to sit up. "Aunt Thérèse was the Superior, but she is dead. I walked to Chaudfontaine in the night—and—oh, Madame Bertrand, don't let them come and take me back!" She gave a terrified glance round the room, and caught hold of Madame Bertrand's gown.

"No one shall take you away, don't be afraid, *chère petite;* but tell us all about it. Walked to Chaudfontaine in the night? Why, you must be half dead, poor little one! And what have you come to Spa for—have you any friends here?"

"No," said Madelon, "I thought you would help me, and let me stay here for a little while."

"And so you shall—for as long as you like," said Madame; "but what have you come here for? Have you no friends to go to?"

"Yes—I—I—ah, I forgot," cried Madelon, burying her face in her hands. All of a sudden she remembered how she had intended writing to Monsieur Horace, all that she had meant to say to him, and how she would have asked him to come and help her—and now all was at an end. As to telling Madame Bertrand or any one else of her cherished plans—never; that was her own secret, which she would never, never part with, except to Monsieur Horace himself. "I forgot," she cried, "I have no one—ah! what shall I do, what shall I do?"

"Do?" said the Countess, interposing with much prompt energy, "it is not difficult to know what you must do; you must go back to the convent, of course. I never heard of anything so improper as your running away."

"No, no, no," cried Madelon; "I cannot go back there—never; they would kill me." She flung herself down on the sofa again, while old Madame Bertrand tried to comfort her. No one should make her go back; she was her *chère petite*, she would take care of her—and was she not very hungry? would she like some soup, or some cakes, or some bread and confiture?

Meanwhile the Countess was saying to Mademoiselle Henriette, "This is a most extraordinary affair. If we do not take care, your excellent aunt will be imposed upon; but I am going back to Liége in an hour, and can perfectly well take the little girl with me, and leave her at the convent."

"Indeed, Madame, we should be much indebted to you," said Mademoiselle Henriette, briskly; "it is evident that she has no friends, and has come to my aunt simply because she was in some way acquainted with her formerly. As you say, if we do not take care we shall certainly have her on our hands; my aunt is quite capable of it."

"Then that is easily settled," said the Countess; "I will take charge of her. No thanks, Mademoiselle, I am only doing my duty. I really do not know what young people of the present day will come to. Does any one know what her name is, or anything about her?"

Madame Bertrand, who had been vainly endeavoring to extract from our desponding little Madelon any decided ex-

pression of opinion on the subject of cakes or confitures, overheard this last question. "Poor little one, I know her very well," she said, lowering her voice confidentially, "her name is Linders; her father was Monsieur Linders, a famous gambler—it was long before you came here, Henriette, and Madame will not have heard of him probably; but here in Spa he was well known, and he used often to come to our hotel."

"Linders!" cried the Countess—"M. Linders—yes, certainly I remember him perfectly, and the little girl too. M. Linders?—of course, every one knew him."

"Ah! Madame, did you know my father?" said Madelon, raising her head at these last words, and clasping her hands imploringly; "be good to me then, I entreat of you; do not speak of sending me back to the convent. I cannot go!"

There was something pitiful in the child's voice and gesture, something pathetic in the little appeal to her father's memory, that might have touched any one less animated by a stern sense of duty than the Countess. As it was, she was not in the least affected.

"On the contrary, *mon enfant*," she answered, "I shall be doing you the greatest kindness, and no more than my duty, in taking you back there; and we have agreed that you shall return with me at once."

"I will not go," cried Madelon, wildly; "I cannot, I will not!—I will not! Do you hear? What right have you to take me? I am not your child!—I will not go with you!"

She got up as she spoke, confronting the Countess, and trying to throw all the energy of which she was capable into her vehement words. But even in her own ears her voice sounded shrill and weak, and seemed to die away as if she were talking in her sleep; the very strength of her emotion appeared unreal, and failing her when she most needed it: her words seemed to have no meaning, and as she finished speaking, she dropped down on her seat again with a little sob, feeling that she was conquered, for she had no power of resistance left in her.

So she lay upon the sofa in a sort of doze, while a tribunal of three sat upon, condemned, and sentenced this poor

little criminal, who knew nothing of what they were saying after she had made her own ineffectual little protest. Madame Bertrand, indeed, good old soul, with the softest and kindest of hearts, would not at first hear of her being sent away; she was fond of the child, she said; she had known her for years, and felt sure there was something in her story that they did not yet understand. But Madame Bertrand was old—moreover, she was not a little in awe of the niece whom she had called in to assist her failing powers; moreover, she had perhaps a lurking idea that they might after all be right, and that there was something exceptionally heinous in running away from a convent, so she was soon overruled by the other two, who settled the matter in a very summary way—Madelon must return to the convent with Madame la Comtesse that very day.

She was roused up presently, and made to drink some wine by Madame Bertrand, who was in despair because she could eat none of the good things she had provided, and felt nothing but an old traitress, as Madelon stood up at last, looking about her with dazed eyes; and then, without further opposition, submissively put on her hat, took up her bundle, and prepared to follow the Countess. Indeed, had Madame Bertrand known how recently the child had recovered from a long illness, nothing, I think, would have induced her to let her go; but she only supposed she was over-tired with her strange night journey; and, in fact, the wine and the rest together had so far revived Madelon that she appeared quite capable of walking down to the station with the Countess. Madame Bertrand gave her a great hug as she wished her good-bye, and was perhaps a little aggrieved at the passive way in which Madelon received it.

"If ever you want help, come back to me—will you not, *mon enfant?*—and I will help you, if I can."

"Yes," said Madelon; "but they will not let me run away again; will they?"

"Let you run away, *ma petite?*"

"Yes—Aunt Thérèse, you know. She won't let me do it again."

"Your aunt? You told me she was dead," cried Madame.

"Yes, so she is," said Madelon. "I was forgetting, I think. Good-bye, Madame Bertrand. You will let me stay next time, will you not? But I must go now?" And she followed the Countess out of the house without another word.

Madame la Comtesse, having got her own way, was kind enough to the child who had so unwittingly strayed across her path. When they reached the station she gave her her ticket, made her sit down in the waiting-room, and even offered her refreshment in the interval before the train started. Indeed, we should err if we attributed to the Countess, whom this little episode in our Madelon's history has brought for the second, and we may trust for the last time before us—we should err, I say, in attributing to her any feeling of ill-will towards Madelon, or any special interest in her conduct or fate. Neither need it be imagined that she was actuated by any large views of duty towards the world in general: she was not at all benevolent, but neither was she particularly ill-natured; she was merely a shallow-minded, frivolous woman, who, having long since lowered her standard of perfection to suit her own attainments, saw fit to measure every one else by her own narrow ideal, and to set them right where they proved themselves wanting—a convenient process, which enabled her to satisfy her vague sense of duty, and right and wrong, without any reference to her own possible shortcomings. In capturing our little stray Madelon, and taking her back to the convent, she felt she was doing a deed that would afford her matter for self-congratulation for days to come; and she was gracious and affable accordingly, speaking to Madelon in a tone of condescending good-nature, which was quite lost upon the child, who was beyond caring for kindness or unkindness just then. She was only conscious of some terrible burden, which she could not define nor reason upon, but which seemed to oppress and weigh her down, making her incapable of thought, or speech, or motion. When they got into the railway-carriage she could only lean back in the corner, with a general sense that something dreadful had happened, or was going to happen; but that her head ached too much, and felt too confused, for her to remember what it was all about.

They changed carriages at Pepinster, and, still in the same dream of misery, Madelon followed the Countess from one train to another. They set off again, but presently, as the slackening speed showed that they were approaching another station, she suddenly woke up to the keenest perception of her situation, with a quickening of her numbed senses to the most vivid realization of all she had lost, of all she might have to endure. Ah! it was all true, and no dream—she had run away from the convent to make Monsieur Horace's fortune; and she had not done it, and now all was over, and she was being taken back to the convent —and there would be no more chance of escape for her—never more. In the agony of this thought she turned towards the Countess, with a half-formed intention of throwing herself at her feet, and imploring, in such voice and accents as should admit of no refusal, to be allowed to go away—anyhow, anywhere, only as far as possible from Liége. But she checked herself as she saw that the Countess, with a handkerchief thrown over her face, had comfortably composed herself to sleep in one corner, and a new idea suggested itself as the train stopped at a little village station. The child glanced towards the woman; she still slept, or appeared to do so, and the next moment Madelon had opened the door, and taking up her bundle, had slid swiftly and silently out of the carriage.

The train moved on, and a drowsy Countess might presently awake to find with astonishment that she was alone in the compartment; but our little Madelon, left standing on the platform, had slipped out of her sight and knowledge for ever.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Restaurant at Le Trooz.

THE train disappeared, and our forlorn little Madelon remained standing alone on the platform. Forlorn, indeed! It was raining hard now, a thick, persistent drizzle, through which everything looked dim and blurred, and which was almost as dense as the low-hanging mists that hid the tops of the hills. Madelon stood still and shivered for a minute, clutching her little bundle under her cloak, and trying to collect her ideas.

Not a hundred yards off was the village, lying between the hills in the next valley to Chaudfontaine, and not more than three miles from that place, but shut out from it by a barrier of rocky, wooded hill, round which there was only just space for the road and stream to wind; an amphibious little village, half in and half out of the water apparently, for it stood just where the stream spread out in wide shallows, round low islands, on and among which the houses were clustered and scattered. Madelon instinctively turned towards it; she had the very vaguest idea in her poor bewildered little brain as to where she was, or what she was going to do, only one thing obvious in the surrounding uncertainties—that she could not remain standing on the platform in the pouring rain. She gave up her ticket mechanically, passed through the gate, and followed the muddy road leading to the cottages. She was very tired, she had never felt quite so tired before, and her knees trembled as they had done that day when the fever came on at the convent; she was so dizzy too, that she had to stop now and then, to grasp the one fact of her being where she was and not somewhere else altogether; her single idea was to go on walking until—until when? That was a question she could not have

answered, only somewhere she must go, where she would be out of the way of countess or nuns, or any other enemy who might be lying in wait to pounce upon her. This was all she thought about as she passed along the village street, which was dull and deserted-looking enough on this wet, gray afternoon, till the sight of a church with an open door, suggested something quite different, and which was a positive relief after that nightmare motion of walking perpetually with failing limbs, and a sense of pursuit behind. She would go in there, and sit down and rest for a little while. By-and-by, when the giddiness and trembling had gone off, she would be better able to think of what she should do; she would be out of the rain, too, there—the cold rain, which had already drenched her cloak and skirt.

She went in; it was a village church of the simplest description very small, with plain wooden benches and confessionals, and a high altar with inexpensive decorations, in nowise remarkable. But hardly was Madelon inside the door, when she stood suddenly motionless, transfixed by a horrible terror that, weak and exhausted as she was, wholly seized and gained possession of her; for, raised in the middle of the aisle, covered with a black velvet pall and with a row of tall candles on either side, stood a coffin, with white embroidery of death's heads on the pall, and little banners with painted death's heads decorating every candle. To the terrified, speechless child, the skulls seemed to become animated—to grin; they seemed to move; the whole air was suddenly full of them, chattering, dancing, swarming round her; she tried to scream, but could not; she turned to fly from the dreadful, haunted spot, but with the first step she made, strength and consciousness gave way altogether, and she sank senseless to the ground.

Ten minutes later, a woman of the village, coming in to see the preparations for the funeral of Monsieur N——, lately one of the great proprietors of the neighborhood, nearly stumbled over Madelon's prostrate form. She started back, half uttering an exclamation of surprise and alarm; then, seeing that it was a child who was lying so still upon the stone floor, she knelt down by her, laid her head in her lap, and began rubbing her hands. Madelon was not quite

unconscious, apparently, for she moved her head uneasily, and uttered a low moan. "She is not dead, at any rate,' muttered the woman, still chafing the cold little hands, while she studied the small white face, the short rings of hair just appearing under the hat all crushed in her fall, the bundle lying at her side, and the worn frock and cloak soaked with rain. "I wonder if she is alone?" added the woman to herself. She glanced round the empty church, then gently laying Madelon on the floor again, with a cushion to support her head, she went to the door, and peered out into the rain for a few moments; then, returning, without calling for help, or summoning any one, she stooped down, took Madelon in her arms—which, indeed, she was well able to do, for she was a tall, strong woman, between thirty and forty, and the child was very slight and thin after her recent illness—and carried her out of the church, down the street, towards the end of the village. No one was stirring in the pouring rain, or seemed to notice her, except one or two boys, who ran after her shouting and singing—"Eh, Jeanne-Marie, Jeanne-Marie—what have you got, to-day, Jeanne-Marie?" And to them she gave no sort of heed, walking steadily and swiftly on, without even turning her head, till she paused before a low, white-washed cottage, standing a little apart from the village, between the poplars that bordered the road. In front was a bench, and on one side a vine, all dripping and forlorn, was trained over a trellis that sloped from the roof, and, with wooden supports, made a shelter for a row of bee-hives placed on a plank beneath; under the front gable was a wicker contrivance for pigeons, and below it, in large gold letters on a blue board, the words, "Café et Restaurant." The door opened at once into the little public room of the humblest pretensions, furnished with a cupboard containing a store of bottles and glasses, a stove in one corner, above it some bright copper tea-kettles, a dozen chairs, and a deal table pushed near the one small window that looked out on the road and the stream beyond, and then across fields and meadows, and trees, to the hills. A man, with a heavy, loutish face and figure, was sitting with his arms on the table, twirling a glass about in his fingers, a bottle half full of wine before

him. He turned round as Jeanne-Marie entered with Madelon in her arms, and rising slowly went towards them.

"Eh, Jeanne-Marie, what have you got there?" he said.

"Does that concern you?" answered the woman sharply enough; "drink your wine, Jacques Monnier, and do not trouble yourself with other people's affairs."

"*Est-elle morte, la petite?*" asked Jacques, recoiling at the sight of Madelon's white face.

"*Est-elle morte?*" repeated Jeanne-Marie, "and with her eyes as wide open as yours! *Allons, mon enfant, du courage,*" she added, as Madelon opened her eyes for a moment; but she closed them again, and the woman looking round, said, "There will be no peace here, with your men coming in and out. Open that door for me, Jacques," pointing to one nearly opposite the entrance.

The man obeyed. It opened at the bottom of the ladder-like staircase, a gleam of light from above, showing where another door at the top step led into a small bedroom. Jeanne-Marie carried Madelon upstairs like a baby, took off her hat and damp cloak, laid her on the bed, and then ran downstairs again for a glass of cordial.

Madelon, however, was already reviving, and when Jeanne-Marie went up to her again, she raised herself on the bed, resting on one elbow, and fixed her large eyes upon the woman, first with a look of blank unconsciousness, and then with a sudden light of terror in them, as of some wild hunted thing just caught by its pursuers.

"Don't take me back to the convent!" she cried in sharp, piteous accents; "don't take me back; I can't go, I can't—no, no, no!"

"No one shall take you back," said Jeanne-Marie, trying to soothe her. But she paid no heed.

"Indeed I can't go. Ah, Madame, you said you knew papa; have pity upon me! I promised him I would never be a nun. He died, you know, and sent me to the convent at Liége to be with Aunt Thérèse; but he made me promise before he died. I can't go back—I should die, too. Ah, Madame, have pity on me!"

She was kneeling on the bed now, her hands clasped with a pitiful little imploring gesture. Jeanne-Marie came

close to her, and smoothed back her hair caressingly with her rough work-a-day fingers.

"*Soyez tranquille, mon enfant*," she said, "you shall not be taken back to the convent, and no one shall make you a nun."

"You promise?" said Madelon, catching hold of her arm, and looking into her face with eager, suspicious eyes; "you promise not to take me back?"

"Yes, I promise," said the woman; "fear nothing, *ma petite*."

"And you won't tell Aunt Thérèse that I ran away? For she would be so angry, you know; she wanted to make me a nun like herself; you won't tell her—you won't, you won't?"

"No, no," said Jeanne-Marie. "I will tell nothing, you are quite safe here; now lie down and be quiet, and I will give you something nice to drink."

But Madelon's eyes wandered; the terrified look came again, and she clung tighter and tighter to Jeanne-Marie.

"Please ask Aunt Thérèse to go away!" she cried; "she is standing there in the corner of the room, staring at me; she will not move—there—there she is, don't you see? Oh, tell her to go away—she stares at me so, and oh! there is a coffin at her side, it is all over death's heads; Aunt Thérèse has a death's head—oh! take me away, take me away!"

With a shriek of terror the child threw herself back on the bed, covering her eyes with her hands, burying her face in the pillow.

Jeanne-Marie went to the top of the stairs and called "Jacques Monnier!"

"*Hein?*" said the man, coming slowly to the door below, and standing with his broad figure framed in it.

"Jacques," said Jeanne-Marie, "go at once for the doctor, and tell him to come here, for some one is very ill."

"*Hein?*" said Jacques again, "does that concern me? I must attend to my own affairs, and finish my wine, Jeanne-Marie."

"If you do not go this moment," said the woman, with a little stamp of her foot, "you shall never taste my wine

again, with or without payment, Jacques, *et je tiens parole, moi!*"

"There is other wine to be had in Le Trooz," answered the man sulkily, but moving nevertheless towards the entrance, when he was recalled by Jeanne-Marie.

"Jacques," she said, coming two or three steps down the stairs, "if Monsieur le Docteur inquires who is ill, you will say it is my niece."

"But she is then your niece, *la petite*," said Jacques, scratching his head as an outward expression of some inward perplexity.

"You will tell Monsieur le Docteur what I say," repeated Jeanne-Marie imperiously, "and make haste;" and she went upstairs again, and closed the bed-room door with a certain emphasis, as though to prevent further discussion.

"Madelon was still lying on the bed, with her face buried in the pillow; a violent shivering of cold or of fear had seized her, but she resisted Jeanne-Marie's efforts to raise her with the obstinacy of a strong will acted on by intense physical alarm. But at length the woman's persuasive words appeared to have a soothing effect. though she seemed scarcely to take in their meaning, for she allowed herself to be undressed and put into bed, and after taking some warm drink, fell into a restless, starting sleep.

Jeanne-Marie drew a curtain across the small window, so as to shut out the slanting sunbeams, which were pouring into the room, on to the patchwork quilt and white pillow where the little feverish head lay so uneasily; then, taking up her knitting she sat down by the bedside, and as she mechanically added row after row to the blue worsted stocking, she reflected. From Madelon's few distracted words she imagined that she knew the state of the case very well; it was one not unprecedented, and presented no difficulties to either comprehension or belief. "They wanted to bring her up as a nun, and so she ran away. Well, thou hast done wisely, little one; I also know something of convents and nuns, and if it depends on me to protect thee, they shall not touch thee, *mon enfant*." This was her final resolution as she sat knitting and reflecting, with a great sympathy with, and tenderness for, the poor little terrified, hunted girl, lying there at her mercy.

Such tenderness, and power of sympathy with distress, were indeed among Jeanne-Marie's strongest characteristics, hidden though they were under a harsh, imperious manner and exterior. For she too had had a strange, sad troublous life, with tragedy and sorrow enough in it, which it does not concern us to relate here, and which were yet of no small concern to our little Madelon, as she lay there, dependent on this one woman for freedom, shelter, and even existence. For if, as is surely the case, in our life of to-day lies a whole prophecy of our life in the future, if in our most trivial actions is hidden the germ of our greatest deeds, then our most momentous decision in some sudden emergency is but the sure consummation and fruition of each unnoticed detail, our action of to-day but the inevitable result of a whole previous lifetime of preparation for some unforeseen crisis. So, too, from a present habit of thought, much may be surmised as to what has been done and suffered in the past; and though little was known about Jeanne-Marie, some inferences might have been drawn concerning her former life, had any of her neighbors been skilled in the inductive method, or been sufficiently interested in the woman to study her character closely. But in fact they cared very little about her. It is true that when she had first come into the village, there had been many conjectures about her set afloat. She did not belong to that part of the country, she could not even speak the Liége *patois*, and never took the trouble to learn it, invariably using the French language. She had no belongings, and never spoke of her former life; so that it was not long before a vague, open-mouthed curiosity, seizing upon a thousand untested hints and rumors to satisfy itself withal, led the villagers to whisper among themselves that some strange history was attached to her; and woe to that woman who, in a small village, is accredited with a strange history that no one knows anything about! But Jeanne-Marie had outlived all this; her secrets, if she had any, were never revealed either then or later, and in time people had ceased to trouble themselves about her. She led a silent, solitary life, resenting perhaps the suspicion with which she had at first been received, and holding aloof from her neighbors as they held

aloof from her. Her restaurant was well attended, for she gave the best wine in the village, was liberal, and of an honesty above suspicion; but even the men who were her most constant customers did not like her, and were half afraid of her. She held imperious rule among them, issuing imperative commands which she expected to be obeyed, and enforcing strict order and regularity in her house. To the women of the village her manners were cold, abrupt, and reserved; she never stopped to gossip or chatter; she would come and go about her business without an unnecessary word, and the women, looking after her, had ceased to do more than shrug their shoulders, and resume the flow of talk her silent presence had checked.

But it was, after all, only the gay, and prosperous, and happy that she shunned. The poor, the friendless, the erring, the rejected of this world, were certain to find in Jeanne-Marie a friend who never failed, one who looked out for the sorrowful and broken-hearted, and never passed by on the other side. Even the village children knew to whom to run when hurt, or unhappy, or in disgrace, sure of getting consolation and sugar-plums from the sad, lonely woman, though equally sure of being sent away as soon as their tears were dried, and their troubles forgotten. If the poor, abused Ugly Duckling of Hans Andersen's tale had strayed on a wintry day to her door, she would have taken it in, and nourished and cherished it all through the cold, dark weather; but when the summer was come, and the duckling grown into a swan, spread its broad white wings against the blue sky, she would have watched it fly away without word or sign to detain it; she would have had nothing in common with it then.

So to Jeanne-Marie it seemed the simplest thing in the world, that, having found Madelon in need of help, she should help her at the cost of any trouble to herself; that she should take in and cherish this poor little stray girl without inquiry, without hope, or thought of reward. At Madelon, happy, successful, contented, Jeanne-Marie would not have looked a second time; but for Madelon, forsaken, shelterless, dependent on her, she would have been ready almost to lay down her life.

In about half an hour Jacques Monnier returned with the doctor. He knew Jeanne-Marie well, as he knew every one in the village, and went at once upstairs to the little bedroom where Madelon was lying.

"Your niece, I think Jacques Monnier told me?" he said, after watching Madelon for a minute as she lay in her uneasy sleep.

"Yes," said Jeanne-Marie with a certain sullenness of manner, which she was apt to display towards her superiors in station.

"Has she been here long?" said the doctor, feeling Madelon's pulse, but looking steadily at the woman; "when was she taken ill? How is it you have not called me in before?"

"Look here, Monsieur le Docteur," answered Jeanne-Marie with a sort of stolid defiance, "I called you in to tell me what to do for the child, not to put me through a catechism. She fainted away this morning, and when she came to herself again, she began to rave and talk nonsense, so I sent for you. Now tell me what is to be done."

Just then Madelon opened her eyes.

"Do you not know me, Madame?" she said. "I am Madeleine Linders, and papa is dead; he sent me to be with Aunt Thérèse, but she is dead too—Oh, save me, save me!" she cried, springing up with all the old terror upon her; "don't let them take me, papa, you made me promise that I would not stay there. Tell Aunt Thérèse to go away, papa; papa, save me!" and she clung to the doctor's arm. "Besides, you know," she went on, speaking fast and eagerly, "I promised him—Monsieur Horace, you know—and I must keep it, I must keep my promise to Monsieur Horace,—I must, I must!"

"You hear?" said Jeanne-Marie, as Madelon fell back on the pillow again muttering to herself.

"I hear," answered the doctor, "and I see that she is in a high fever, and it may go hard with her poor child! It is fortunate she is with you, Jeanne-Marie," he went on, kindly, "for you are a capital nurse, I know, but I am afraid it will be a long business."

"That is no matter," she answered.

"If you would like to have her removed to the hospital at Liége," continued the doctor, doubtfully, "it might still be done. It may injure your business to have her here. Still, as you say she is your niece—"

"As I say she is my niece," returned Jeanne-Marie, abruptly, "it is not likely I should turn her out of the house, and that is enough. My business will take care of itself. And now tell me what I am to do, doctor?"

He prescribed for Madelon, said he would call again, and left the house, pondering on the woman who kept so apart from her neighbors, and on her small visitor, who he knew well enough was not her niece, for had not Jacques Monnier told him how Jeanne-Marie had suddenly come in out of the rain, carrying the girl in her arms, and had taken her upstairs without a word of explanation?

"There is a mystery somewhere," thought the doctor; "but it is no concern of mine." And so he went his way to visit his next patient.

Jeanne-Marie had no fears concerning the doctor's discretion; he was a man too busy in his scattered district to have much time or inclination for gossip. But she had far less confidence in Jacques Monnier's wisdom, and thought it not inexpedient to go downstairs, after the doctor's departure, and give her customer a word of exhortation. He was seated at the table as before, twirling the glass in his fingers, and gazing vacantly out of the window.

"Well, Jacques," said Jeanne-Marie, "and what did you tell the doctor?"

"I told him what you told me," said the man, in a surly voice.

"What was that?"

"That your niece was ill, and that he was to come and see her."

"Was that all?"

No answer.

"Was that all?" repeated Jeanne-Marie. "*Allons*, Jacques, don't keep me waiting. I will know what you said to the doctor."

Jacques, who under other circumstances might have met this imperative mode of questioning by dogged silence.

or an evasive answer, was too uncertain as to what the doctor himself might have repeated to Jeanne-Marie, to attempt equivocation.

"I told him," he said, slowly and reluctantly, "that it was a queer thing you should have picked up your niece in the street, and that I didn't believe she was was your niece at all; and no more I do, Jeanne-Marie," he added, gaining courage as he spoke.

"Ah! you told him that?" said the woman. "Well, look you, Jacques, if I find you saying any such thing again, this is the very last time you cross my door-step, and that account of yours will have to be paid in full next week. You understand?"

"Oh! yes, I understand well enough," he answered sulkily; "but if I hold my tongue the neighbors will talk; I am not the only person who saw you come through the street, I will answer for it."

"Who said I came through the village at all? And what does it matter to you what the neighbors say?" retorted Jeanne-Marie, "attend to what I say—that is enough for you, Jacques—and if you do hear any one say anything about the child upstairs, tell them it is my niece come on a visit, and not a word more; otherwise you understand—"

"Oh! yes, I understand," he repeated grumbling, "but what do I care? Yours is not the only wine to be had in Le Trooz—"

"Bah!" was Jeanne-Marie's only answer, as she left the room. She knew her customer too well to be in the least afraid of his carrying his implied threat into execution. Indeed, Jacques Monnier, who had no mind to be ousted from the convenient little restaurant, where he got good wine and long credit, acted upon the hints he had received, and stuck manfully to Jeanne-Marie's version of her adventure. And so it happened, that although for a day or two a few rumors were afloat in the village, they soon died away; and it was received as an established fact by those who cared to interest themselves in Jeanne-Marie's affairs, that it was her niece whom the doctor went to see so regularly. And so much apart did Jeanne-Marie keep from her neighbors, that the subject was soon half-forgotten, and

Madelon's very existence seemed problematic, as she lay in the little upstairs room, and the woman who sheltered her, appeared to come and go about her business much the same as usual.

As for Jeanne-Marie, as soon as the house was quiet on the evening of that day so eventful for our little Madelon, she sat down and wrote two letters: one she put into a large envelope, which she directed to a street in Paris; the other, inclosed in this first, was addressed to the Superior of the Convent at Liége, and the letters, with their Paris direction, were put into the post that very night.

CHAPTER XIV.

Madelon's Convalescence.

MADELON, if she had but known it, had small reason to apprehend any very vigorous pursuit on the part of the nuns. There was, it is true, no small commotion in the convent when Sœur Lucie, entering Madelon's cell the morning after her flight, found the empty room, the unslept-on bed. She did not indeed realize at first that the child had run away; but when, after inquiry and search through the whole convent, she found that nothing had been seen or heard of her since she herself had quitted the cell the previous evening, then the whole truth became apparent, and a general sense of consternation pervaded the sisterhood. It was the enormity of the offence that struck them aghast, the boldness of the attempt, and its complete success. It was altogether a new idea to them that any one should wish to escape from those walls; an appalling one that any one should make such an attempt, and succeed. Sœur Lucie, held responsible for Madelon, was summoned before the Superior, questioned, cross-questioned, and, amid tears and sobs, could only repeat that she had left her charge as usual the evening before, and that, in the morning, going to her cell, had discovered that she had vanished; how, or when, or whither, she could not imagine. How she had escaped was indeed at first a mystery, which could not fail to rouse an eager curiosity in the sisters, and a not unpleasing excitement succeeded the first indignation, as, with one accord, they ran to examine Madelon's room. The window stood wide open, the branches of the climbing rose-trees were broken here and there, small footsteps could be traced on the flower-bed below. It was all that was needed to make their supposition a certainty—Madelon had run away.

This point settled, a calmer feeling began to prevail, and, as their first consternation subsided, the nuns began to reflect that, after all, worse things might have happened. If it had been one of themselves indeed, that would have been a very different matter; such a sin, such a scandal could not even be thought of without horror. But this little stray girl, who belonged to nobody, whom nobody had cared for, who had been a trouble ever since she had come, and who had been left a burden and a responsibility on their hands—why should they concern themselves so much about her flight? No doubt she had made her escape to some friends she had known before she was brought to the convent, from no one knew where, two or three years ago. The nuns were not more averse than other people to the drawing of convenient conclusions from insufficient premises, and this theory of Madelon's having run away to her friends once started, every one was ready to add their mite of evidence in aid of its confirmation. Some thought she had possibly started for England—it was an Englishman who had brought her to the convent; others that she had friends in Paris—it certainly was from Paris she had come; one suggested one thing, and one another, and in the meantime, though inquiries were made, the search was neither very energetic nor very determined. When the evening came, it was generally felt to be rather a relief than otherwise that nothing had been heard of the small runaway. What could they do with her if she came back? No one felt disposed to put in a claim for her—least of all Sœur Lucie, whom she had brought into terrible disgrace, and who had yet been really fond of the child, and who for months after had a pang in her kind little heart whenever she thought of her wayward charge. And so, when, two days later, a letter, with neither date nor signature, but bearing a Paris postmark, arrived for the Superior, announcing that Mademoiselle Madeleine Linders was with friends, that it was useless for any one to attempt to find her or reclaim her, for they had her in safe keeping, and would never consent to part with her, every one felt that the matter was arranged in the most satisfactory manner possible, and troubled themselves no more.

As for the Countess G——, there had been a flatness about the termination of her share in Madelon's adventures that effectually put a stop to any desire on her part to pursue the matter further; and finding on her arrival at Liége, that her husband was obliged to start for Brussels that very afternoon, she found it convenient altogether to dismiss the subject from her mind. With her departure from Liége, we also gladly dismiss her from these pages for ever.

So, Madelon, tossing and moaning on her bed of sickness, is once more all alone in the world, except for Jeanne-Marie, to whom, before two days were over, she had somehow become the one absorbing interest in life. The lonely woman, whose sympathies and affections had, as one might guess, been all bruised, and warped, and crushed in some desperate struggle, or in some long agony, found a new channel for them in an indescribable, yearning love for the little pale girl whom she had rescued, and by whose side she sat hour after hour, wondering, as she listened to her wild broken talk about her father and Monsieur Horace, Aunt Thérèse, and Sœur Lucie, what the child's past life could have been, and by what strange chances she had come to be in such evil straits. A new world of hopes and fears, of interests and anxieties, seemed to have suddenly opened for Jeanne-Marie, as she sat in the little upper chamber; while in the public room downstairs the rough men, in obedience to her word, sat silently drinking and smoking, or talking in subdued voices, so that no disturbing sound might reach the sick child above.

Madelon's second attack of fever was far worse than the first. Weakened as she was by her former illness, it was an almost hopeless fight with death that was carried on for days; and when the crisis came at last, the doctor himself declared that it was scarcely possible that she should rally, and be restored to life and reason. But the crisis passed, and Madelon was once more safe. She awoke about midnight to the confused consciousness of a strange room, perplexing her with unfamiliar surroundings. A dim light burned before the colored picture of a saint that hung on the rough white-washed wall, and by its uncertain gleam she could distinguish the rude furniture, the patchwork quilt, the

heavy rafters that crossed above her head. The window stood wide open, letting in the night scents of the flowers in the garden below; she could see a space of dark, star-lit sky, and hear the rustling of the trees, the whispering of the breeze among the vine-leaves that clustered about the window. Her eyes wandered round with vague bewilderment, the flickering light and long shadows only seeming to confuse her more, as she tried to reconcile her broken, shadowy memories with the present realities, which seemed more dreamlike still.

The door opened, and Jeanne-Marie came in, holding another candle, which she shaded with her hand, as she stood by the bed for a moment, looking down upon Madelon.

"You are better," she said at last, setting down the candle on the table behind her, and smoothing the pillow and coverlet. Her voice was like her face, harsh and melancholy, but with a tender, pathetic ring in it at times.

"Am I?" said Madelon. "Have I been ill again? Where is Sœur Lucie? This is not the convent—where am I?"

"You are not at the convent now," answered Jeanne-Marie. "I am taking care of you, and you must lie very still, and go to sleep again when you have taken this."

Madelon drank of her medicine, but she was not satisfied, and in a moment her brain was at work again.

"I can't make out where I am," she said, looking up at Jeanne-Marie with the old wistful look in her eyes—"is it in a hotel?—is papa coming? I thought I was at the convent with Aunt Thérèse. Ah! do help me!"

"I will tell you nothing unless you lie still," said Jeanne-Marie, as Madelon made a most futile attempt to raise herself in bed. She considered a moment and then said—"Don't you remember, *ma petite?* Your papa is dead, and you are not at the convent any more, and need not go back there unless you like. You are with me, Jeanne-Marie, at Le Trooz, and I will take care of you till you are well. Now you are not to talk any more."

Madelon lay silent for a minute. "Yes, I remember," she said at last, slowly. "Papa is dead, and Monsieur Horace—he is not here?" she cried, with startling eagerness.

"No, no," said Jeanne-Marie, no one is here but me."

"Because you know," Madelon went on, "I cannot see him yet—I cannot—it would not do to see him, you know, till—till—ah! you do not know about that—" She stopped suddenly, and Jeanne-Marie smoothed the pillow again with her rough, kindly hands.

"I know that you must go to sleep now, and that I shall not say a word more to you to-night," she said; and then, without heeding Madelon's further questions, she put out the light, and sat silently by the bedside till the child was once more asleep.

Madelon did not recover readily from this second attack. Even when she was pronounced wholly out of danger, there were the weariest days to be passed, relapses, weakness, languor. Flowers bloomed and faded in the garden below, the scent of the roses perfumed the air, the red-tipped vine-shoots growing upwards narrowed the space of blue sky seen through the little window, till the sun shone in softened by a screen of glowing green leaves; and all through these lengthening summer days our pale little Madelon lay on her sick bed, very still, and patient, and uncomplaining, and so gentle and grateful to Jeanne-Marie, who nursed and watched her unceasingly with her harsh tenderness, that a passionate affection seized the hard, lonely woman, for the forlorn little stranger who was so dependent upon her, and who owed everything to her compassion and care.

It was not long before a recollection of the past came back to Madelon, sufficiently clear, until the moment of her jumping out of the train at Le Trooz; after that she could remember nothing distinctly, only a general sense of misery, and pain, and terror. She asked Jeanne-Marie numberless questions, as to how and where she had found her, and what she had said.

"How did you know that I had run away from the convent?" she asked.

"You said so," answered Jeanne-Marie. "You were afraid that your aunt would come and take you back."

"Aunt Thérèse is dead," said Madelon. "I remember it all very well now. Did I tell you that? And did I tell

you about papa, too? How strange that I should not remember having said so many things;" she added, as the woman replied in the affirmative.

"Not at all strange," replied Jeanne-Marie. "People often talk like that when ill, and recollect nothing of it afterwards."

"Still, it is very odd," said Madelon, musing; and then she added, suddenly, "Did I talk of any one else?"

"Of plenty of people," replied Jeanne-Marie. "Sœur Lucie, and Sœur Françoise, and numbers of others."

"Ah! yes; but I don't mean in the convent!—any one out of the convent, I mean? Did I talk of—Monsieur Horace?"

"Sometimes," said Jeanne-Marie, counting her stitches composedly.

"What did I say about him?" asked Madelon, anxiously. "Please will you tell me? I can't remember, you know."

Jeanne-Marie looked at her for a moment, and then said, rather bluntly:

"Nothing that anybody could understand. You called to him, and then you told him not to come; that was all, and not common sense either."

"Ah, that is all right," said Madelon, satisfied; her secret at least was safe, and never, never, should it be revealed till she had accomplished her task. As she once more mentally recorded this little vow, she looked at Jeanne-Marie, who was still sitting by her bedside knitting.

"Jeanne-Marie," she said in her tired, feeble little voice, and putting out one of her small thin hands, "you are very, very good to me; I can't think how any one can be so kind as you are; I shall love you all my life. What would have become of me if you had not found me and taken such care of me?"

"What will become of you if you don't leave off talking, and do as the doctor bids you?" said Jeanne-Marie, stopping her little speech; "he said you were to be quite quiet, and here have you been chattering this half-hour; now I am going to get your dinner."

As she became stronger, Madelon would sometimes have long conversations with Jeanne-Marie—in which she

would tell her much about her past life, of her father, of how happy she had been as a little child, of how miserable she had been in the convent, and of how she had hated the life there. But more often she would lie still for hours, almost perfectly silent, thinking, brooding over something —Jeanne-Marie would wonder what. Madelon never told her; she had begun to love and cling to the woman, almost the only friend she had in the world, but not even in her would she confide; she had made the resolution to tell no one of her plans and hopes, to trust no one, lest her purpose should in any way be frustrated; and she kept to it, though at the cost of some pain and trouble, so natural is it to seek for help and sympathy.

Madelon's fixed idea had returned to her with redoubled force since her illness. Her one failure had only added intensity to her purpose since her first sense of discouragement had passed away; there was something in the child's nature that refused to acknowledge defeat as such, and she was only eager to begin again. Our poor little Madelon, with her strange experiences and inexperiences, her untutored faiths and instincts, shaking off all rule, ignorant of all conventionalities, only bent, amid difficulties, and obstacles and delays, on steadily working towards one fixed and well-defined end—surely, tried by any of the received laws of polite society, concerning correct, well-educated young ladies of thirteen, she would be found sadly wanting. Shall we blame her? or shall we not rather, with a kindly compassion, try for a while to understand from what point of view she had learnt to look at life, and to arrive at some comprehension of, and sympathy with, her.

In the meantime, though it was evident she could do nothing till she was well again, an old perplexity was beginning to trouble Madelon; what was she to do without money? Once, a strange chance—which, with a touch of convent superstition that had been grafted on her mind, she was half disposed to look upon as miraculous—had provided the requisite sum, but the most sanguine hopes could hardly point to the repetition of such a miracle or chance, and during long hours, when Jeanne-Marie was attending to her customers below, or sitting at her side, knitting,

Madelon's brain was for ever working on this old problem that had proved so hard before, when she sat thinking it out in the convent cell. But at any rate she was free here; she might come and go without scaling walls, or fear of pursuing nuns; and then could she not earn some money? The thought was an inspiration to Madelon—yes, when she was strong and well enough, she would work day and night till she had gained it. If she were only well.

It was about this time that Jeanne-Marie perceived a change in her patient, hitherto so still and resigned, a certain uneasy restlessness and longing to be up and about again.

"Jeanne-Marie, do you think I shall soon be well?" she would ask again and again; "do you think the doctor will soon let me get up?"

"You will never be well if you toss about like that," Jeanne-Marie said grimly, one evening; "lie still, and I will tell you some stories."

She sat down by her, and, as she knitted, told her one story after another, fairy-tales for the most part, old stories that Madelon knew by heart from her early studies in the German picture-books and similar works. But Jeanne-Marie told them well, and somehow they seemed invested with new interest for Madelon, as she half unconsciously contrasted her own experiences with those of the heroes and heroines, and found in their adventures some far-fetched parallel to her own. But then their experiences were so much wider and more varied in that old charmed, sunny, fairy life; the knot of their difficulties was so readily cut, by a simple reference to some Fortunatus' purse, or the arrival in the very nick of time of some friendly fairy. Madelon did not draw the parallel quite far enough, or it might have occurred to her that benevolence did not become wholly extinct with the disappearance of fairies, and that friendly interference is not quite unknown even in these more prosaic days. The Fortunatus' purse, it is true, might awake a sense of comparison, but who could have looked at Jeanne-Marie's homely features, and have dreamed of her in connection with a fairy? In truth, it requires a larger and deeper experience than any that Madelon could have acquired, or reasoned out, to recognize how much of

the charm of these tales of our childhood can be traced to the eternal truths that lie hidden in them, or to perceive that the shining fairy concealed beneath the frequent guise of some crabbed old woman is no mere freak of fancy, but the symbol of a reality, less exceptional perhaps among us poor mortals than among the fairies themselves, who, finding their presence no longer needed, vanished from our earth ever so many centuries ago.

It was the next morning that, after the doctor's visit was over, Jeanne-Marie returned to the bedroom, with the air of having tidings to impart.

"You will be satisfied now, I hope," she said, as she met the gaze of the restless brown eyes. "M. le Docteur says you may get up for an hour this afternoon."

"Does he?" cried Madelon, eagerly; "then he thinks I am better—that I shall soon be well."

"Of course you are better," said Jeanne-Marie—"you are getting stronger every day; you will soon be quite well again."

"And how soon shall I be able to go out?—to go on a journey, for instance?"

"You are, then, very anxious to get away?" asked Jeanne-Marie.

"But yes," said Madelon naïvely, "I must go as soon as possible."

"Ah, well," said the woman, stifling a sigh, "that is only natural; but there is no hurry, you will not be able to go yet."

"No," said Madelon, sadly, "I shall not be able to go yet."

She did not remark Jeanne-Marie's sad voice, nor the unwonted tears that filled her eyes; the woman felt half heart-broken at what she imagined to be her charge's indifference Madelon was not indifferent or ungrateful, but her mind was filled just then with her one idea, and she had no room for any other; it wrought in her what seemed a supreme selfishness, and yet she had no thought of self in the matter.

She lay quite still for a few minutes, her pale little face glowing with her renewed hopes. Then she said:

"Jeanne-Marie, would you mind putting out my things where I can see them?—my frock and all. Then I shall believe I am to get up."

Jeanne-Marie acquiesced silently. Madelon's scanty wardrobe had all been mended and put in order, and now it was spread out before her; but somehow the sight of the old black silk frock brought a sudden chill with it: the very last time she had put it on had been on the morning of the day she had escaped from the convent. Since then what had she not gone through! what disappointment, terror, sickness nearly to death! Might she not indeed have been dead by this time, or a prisoner for ever within the convent walls, had it not been for Jeanne-Marie? Her eyes filled with tears at the thought. She longed to tell Jeanne-Marie once more how much she loved her; but the woman had left the room, and Madelon could only lie patiently, and think of all she was going to do, when she should be well again.

CHAPTER XV.

A Summer with Jeanne-Marie.

AT the back of Jeanne-Marie's house lay the garden, sheltered by the steep rocky hill that rose just beyond. All through the long summer evenings the voices of the men, as they sat smoking and drinking in its vine-covered arbors, might be heard; but during the day it was comparatively deserted, and Jeanne-Marie had no difficulty in finding a quiet, shady corner where Madelon might sit as long as she pleased without being disturbed. An outside wooden staircase led from her room to the garden below, so that she could come and go without passing through the lower rooms of the house; and we may be sure that it was considered a golden day, by both her and Jeanne-Marie, when she first made this little expedition. The child, still almost too weak to stand or walk, was carried by her strong, kind hostess down the flight of steps, and once more found herself under the blue heavens, with a world of sweet summer sights and sounds around her, as she lay on her little improvised couch among the flowers and sweet-smelling herbs.

"There," said Jeanne-Marie, contemplating her with much satisfaction, "now you have nothing to do but to get well again as fast as you can."

"Ah, I shall soon be well now!" cried Madelon, joyfully. The color came into her pale cheeks, her eyes shone with a new light. Mists, and rain, and darkness seemed to have fled from her life, and in their place a full tide of summer sunshine, in which the birds sang gladly, and the flowers seemed to spring up and open unconsciously, was crowning and glorifying the day.

That she had nothing to do but to get well, was not at all Madelon's idea, however. A few evenings later, as she

lay awake in her bed, watching Jeanne-Marie moving about in the twilight, arranging things for the night, she said—

"Jeanne-Marie, I want to earn some money."

"Some money, little one! What is it for?"

"Ah, that I cannot tell you; but I want some, very much—thirty francs at least. See here, I have been thinking—I can embroider—Sœur Lucie said I could do it almost as well as she could; do you think you could get me some to do? Ah, please help me. I should like to earn some money."

Two days afterwards, Jeanne-Marie produced two strips of cloth, such as are used for purposes of church decoration, with patterns and materials for embroidery.

"Is that the sort of thing?" she said. "If you could do these, you would get thirty francs for them, I daresay; I will see that they are disposed of."

"I will try," said Madelon. "Jeanne-Marie, how good you are to me!—whatever I want, you do for me!"

"That is nothing," said the woman, and went abruptly away to attend to her customers.

So, all the long summer days, Madelon sat through hot noontides in the shady garden below, through golden sunsets at the open window of her room above, stitching with silks and gold and silver thread till her weak little fingers ached, and the task seemed as if it would never be done. Down in the homely neglected little garden, all a sweet tangle of flowers and weeds, she would seat herself; the birds would twitter overhead, the bees would come humming round her among the unpruned vines and roses that clambered everywhere, while the embroidery pattern slowly grew beneath her fingers. She worked steadily and well, but she could not work very fast; and she wearied, oh! how she wearied of it sometimes; but she never wavered in her purpose. "It is for Monsieur Horace," she would say, and begin again with fresh zeal. Through the open window of the little kitchen, which looked upon the garden, she could see Jeanne-Marie coming and going, chopping herbs, shelling peas and beans; and sometimes, when Madelon was too tired of her work, she would gladly throw it down, that she might help in these employments. "May I make

an omelette Jeanne-Marie?" she would say; "I know how to do it, if you will let me try." And the sight of Madelon flitting about the kitchen, busy among the pots and pans, seemed to stir some long-forgotten emotion in Jeanne-Marie's sad heart—too long forgotten to be learnt anew without pain, for her eyes would fill with tears as she watched her. The child never went into the village, or indeed stirred beyond the garden; that was all the world to her just now, peopled by Jeanne-Marie, her hopes, and her embroidery.

Is it most strange or most natural, one wonders, that there are times when one small nook of earth shuts out, as it were, the whole universe from our eyes, when one personal interest occupies us to the exclusion of the whole world of action, and progress, and speculation, and thought? Thrones may topple over, nationalities be effaced, revolutions in politics, in religion, in science be effected, and all pass unheeded while we sit counting our own private loss and gain in love or friendship, in grief or joy. While Madelon has been wearying out her little heart and brain in the pursuit of her self-imposed task, the world has not been, and is not, standing still, we may be sure, and her small wheel of life is somehow kept in motion by the great revolving circle of events, however little she may think of, or heed them. Sebastopol has fallen in these last months, the Crimean war is at an end, and all the world that was discussing battles and sieges when Horace Graham last parted with Madelon one September afternoon, is talking of treaties and peace now, as the allied armies move homewards from the East. And—which indeed would have had more interest for Madelon could she have known it—Graham himself, after more than two years' hard work, had been wounded in one of the last skirmishes; and with this wound, and the accompanying fever, had laid for weeks very near to death in the Scutari hospital, to be sent home at last, invalided to England. While Madelon had been slowly recovering from her fever in her little out-of-the-world refuge at Le Trooz, Graham had been gaining health and strength in a pleasant English home, with a sister to nurse and pet him, nephews and nieces to make much of him, and the rosiest

cheeks and bluest eyes in the world to fall in love with, as he lay idly on the lawn through the summer days. It was at the house of his sister, who was married to a country doctor in Kent, that this double process of love-making and convalescence went on, with the greatest success and satisfaction to all parties; and it was Miss Marie Leslie, the ward of his brother-in-law, Dr. Vavasour, who was the owner of those bluest eyes and rosiest cheeks.

Meanwhile Madelon, stitching, stitching away at her work, thought vaguely of Monsieur Horace as being still in that far-off country from which he had last written to her, and wondered a little how soon a letter written to the English address he had given her would reach him. What would he say and think when he received it? And when, ah! when would she be able to write it? She worked on steadily, and yet it was already September when the last stitch was put in, and she could give the work to Jeanne-Marie. A few days afterwards the woman put thirty francs into her hands.

"There is your money," she said; "now what are you going to do with it?"

"I am going away," answered Madelon.

"Yes?" said Jeanne-Marie, without any apparent emotion, "and where are you going?"

"I am going to Spa. Ah! Jeanne-Marie, do not ask me what I am going to do; it is my secret, I cannot tell any one, but you shall know some day."

Jeanne-Marie was silent for a moment, then, "Look here, *ma petite*," she said; "I don't want to know what you are going to do; it is no concern of mine, and I cannot keep you if you want to go away; but who are you going to in Spa? I cannot let you go off without knowing where you are, and whether you are safe. You might have the fever again, or some one might try to take you back to the convent, and I should know nothing about it. Where are you going? Have you any friends at Spa?"

"There is only Madame Bertrand at the Hôtel de Madrid," replied Madelon, rather disconsolately; "I would not mind going to her again, she is so kind; she wanted me to stay with her the last time I was there—but then there is

Mademoiselle Henriette—it was she who wished to send me back to the convent; if she were not there, I should not be afraid."

"And is there no other hotel you could go to?"

"I should not like to go to another," said Madelon, "they would be all strange; I would rather go to Madame Bertrand, and I should not have to stay there long."

"And then what are you going to do?"

"I don't know—I am not sure," answered Madelon, rather embarrassed. "I shall write to a friend I have—Monsieur Horace, you know—and he will tell me what to do."

"And why do you not write to him at once, *mon enfant?*"

"I cannot," was all Madelon's answer, nor could Jeanne-Marie ever extract any further explanation on that point. The next day Jeanne-Marie was missing from the restaurant for some hours; but she reappeared in the afternoon, and presently came out into the garden, where Madelon, seated in her favorite corner, was nursing a big cat, and sorting out herbs for drying.

"What a long time you have been away!" she said, as Jeanne-Marie came up to her. "See, I have done all these; I think there are enough to last you all the winter."

"Not quite," answered the woman; "but never mind them now. Do you want to know where I have been? I have been to Spa, and seen Madame Bertrand."

"Have you?" cried Madelon; "did you tell her about me? Was Mademoiselle Henriette there?"

"Mademoiselle Henriette is gone; she and her aunt had a grand quarrel, and she left, and so Madame Bertrand is alone again. I told her all about you; she said she was glad you had not gone back to the convent, and that you could go to her whenever you wished, for she would take care of you. So as your work is done," Jeanne-Marie added with a sigh, "there is nothing to keep you, and you may go as soon as you like."

"May I?" cried Madelon; "to-morrow, next day? Ah! Jeanne-Marie, how happy you have made me; you will know why, you will understand some day—tell me when I shall go."

"We will say the day after to-morrow. I will get your things ready," answered Jeanne-Marie. She stood gazing at the child for a moment, as if she would have said something more, then turned away quickly and entered the house.

Madelon never thought of connecting Jeanne-Marie's sad looks and ways with her own departure; and, indeed, hardly noticed them, in her joy at having accomplished her task, and earned the longed-for thirty francs. She did not understand nor suspect the woman's passionate longing for her affection; no child can comprehend that strange, pathetic yearning that older people have for a child's love—a love so pure, and fresh, and ingenuous, that when it is freely and frankly given, it is surely the most flattering and precious in the world. Madelon gave Jeanne-Marie all the love she had to bestow, but the first place in her heart was already taken; and perhaps the woman had discovered that it was so, and was half jealous of this unknown Monsieur Horace, whom she divined to be at the bottom of all Madelon's plans and ideas. But if it were so, she never spoke of it, nor of any of the half-formed hopes and projects she may have had; and Madelon never could have guessed them, as her kind, sad hostess silently made up her small wardrobe into a bundle, and patched the old black silk frock once more, sighing over it the while. And had Madelon then no regrets at leaving the little cottage, where she had been tended with such motherly care? Some, perhaps, for as she sat that last evening watching Jeanne-Marie at her work, she, too, sighed a little; and at last, clasping her arms round the woman's neck, she cried, "Jeanne-Marie, I will love you always—always!—I will never forget you!"

"That is as may be," says melancholy Jeanne-Marie, disengaging herself.

"Ah! you will not believe me," said Madelon; "but I tell you I never forget, and you have been so good, so kind to me! Sometimes I think I should like to stay with you always—would you let me?"

"Would I let you?" said Jeanne-Marie, dropping her work suddenly, and looking at the child. "No, I would not let you," she said, after a moment's pause, "unless you had nowhere else to go; but you have other friends, it appears,

and it is well for you. No, I would not let you, for it would be as bad a thing for you as could be. Ask any of the neighbors what they would think of it—ask them if they think you would get good or bad from me, and see what they would say!" She gave a little scornful laugh.

"I don't know what you mean," said Madelon, fixing her great eyes on her with a puzzled look—"I don't care what they would say. You are one of the best people I ever knew, and I love you with all my heart; but I *must* go away."

"Why must you?" asks Jeanne-Marie, stitching away at the black frock.

"That is what I cannot tell you," said Madelon. "No, I will not tell any one, though I should like to tell you, too," added the poor child, gazing wistfully at almost the only friend she had in the world.

"Well, well," said Jeanne-Marie, "I do not want to hear your secrets, as you know, unless you like to tell them; but I am not going to lose sight of you altogether till I hear you are safe with your friends. You must write me a letter from Spa, and if I do not hear or see anything of you in a week's time, I shall come and look after you."

"Yes, I will write," said Madelon; "and I wish—I wish I was not going away; I have been so happy here." And then she hid her face on Jeanne-Marie's shoulder, while the sky was all rosy with the sunset of the last of these peaceful summer days that our Madelon was to spend at Le Trooz.

Jeanne-Marie could not spare time to go again to Spa the next day, but she went with Madelon to the station, and waited till the train that bore her away was out of sight, and then, all lonely, she walked back to her empty home.

CHAPTER XVI.

How Madelon kept her Promise.

MADELON was standing in her little upper bedroom of the Hôtel de Madrid, a room so high up that from the window one looked over the tops of the trees in the Place Royale below, to the opposite hills. It was already dusk, but there was sufficient light to enable her to count over the little piles of gold that lay on the table before her, and which, as she counted, she put into a small canvas bag. It was the third evening after her arrival in Spa; she was preparing for her third visit to the Redoute, and this was what her capital of thirty francs had already produced.

The last ten-franc piece disappeared within the bag, and Madelon, taking her hat and cloak, began to put them on slowly, pausing as she did so to reflect.

"If I have the same luck this evening," she thinks, "to-morrow I shall be able to write to Monsieur Horace—if only I have—and why not? I have scarcely lost once these last two nights. Certainly it is better to play in the evening than in the day-time. I remember now that papa once said so, and to-night I feel certain—yes, I feel certain that I shall win—and then to-morrow—"

She clasped her hands in ecstasy; she looked up at the evening sky. It was a raw, gray September evening, with gusts of wind and showers of rain at intervals. But Madelon cared nothing for the weather; her heart was all glowing with hope, and joy, and exultation. She put on her hat and veil, took up her money, and locking her door after her, ran downstairs. She hung the key up in Madame Bertrand's room, but Madame Bertrand was not there. On Madelon's arrival at the hotel she had found the excellent old woman ill, and unable to leave her room, and it

was in her bed that she had given the child the warmest of welcomes, and from thence that she had issued various orders for her comfort and welfare. Her attack still kept her confined to her room, and thus it happened that our Madelon, quite independent, found herself at liberty to come and go just as she pleased.

She hung up her key, then, in the deserted little parlor, and, unchallenged, left the hotel, and went out into the tree-planted Place, where the band was playing, and people walking up and down under the chill gray skies. She felt very hopeful and joyous, so different from the first time she had started on the same errand, and the fact inspired her with ever-increasing confidence. She had failed then, and yet here she was, successful in her last attempts, ready to make another crowning trial, and with how many more chances in her favor! Surely she could not fail now!—and yet if she should! She was turning towards the Redoute, when an idea suddenly occurred to her—an idea most natural, arising, as it did, from that instinctive cry for more than human help, that awakes in every heart on great emergencies, and appealing, moreover, to that particular class of religious sentiment which in our little orphaned Madelon had most readily responded to convent teaching. What if it had been the Holy Virgin Mother who had been her protector in all these troubles, who had raised her up friends, and had brought her from death, as it were, to life again, to fulfil her promise? And if it were so,—which seemed most probable to Madelon,—would it not be well to invite her further protection, and even by some small offering to give emphasis to her prayers? Madelon's notions, it will be perceived, were not in strict accordance with convent orthodoxy, which would scarcely have been willing to recognize the Virgin's help in a successful escape from the convent itself; but orthodox notions were the last things with which it was to be expected our Madelon would trouble herself. Without other thought than that here might be another and sure way of furthering her one object, she made her way into a church, and expending two sous in a lighted taper, carried it to a little side chapel, where, above a flower-decorated altar, a beneficent Madonna

seemed to welcome all sad orphans in the world to her all-protecting embrace.

To me there is something infinitely touching in these shrines to the Virgin, with all their associations of suffering and prayer, in their little ex-voto pictures, and flowers, and lighted tapers. I do not envy those who can see in them nothing but the expression of a pitiable superstition; to my mind they appeal to far wider sympathies, as one thinks of the sick and weary hearts who have come there to seek consolation and help. Everywhere one comes across these shrines—in the gloom of some great Cathedral, in some homely village church, in some humble wayside chapel, where, amid sunny fields and pastures, amid mountains, streams, and lakes, one reads the little heart-broken scrawls affixed to the grating, praying an Ave-Maria or Paternoster from the passer-by, for a sick person, for a mother watching beside her dying child, for a woman forsaken of the world. A whole atmosphere of consecrated suffering seems to float round these spots sacred to sorrow, the sorrow that humbly appeals, as it best knows how, to the love, wide enough to embrace and comfort all desolate, and yearning, and heavy-laden souls.

One can fancy Madelon as she walks along the dim church; one or two lights twinkle here and there in the darkness, the taper she holds shines on her little pale face, and her brown eyes are lighted up with a sudden glow of enthusiasm, devotion, supplication, as she kneels for a moment before the Virgin's altar, with an Ave-Maria on her lips, and an unspoken prayer in her heart.

Half an hour later, Madelon, in the midst of the blaze of light in the big gambling salon of the Redoute, is thinking of nothing in the world but rouge-et-noir and the chances of the game before her. For the first time she has ventured to push her way through the crowd and take a seat at the table; and for the moment she had forgotten her object, forgotten why she is there even, in the excitement of watching whether black or red will win. It matters little, it seems; whatever she stakes on, comes up; her small capital is being doubled and trebled. She had taken off her veil, which hitherto she had carefully kept down, and the

little flushed face, with the eager eyes that sparkle with impatience at every pause in the game, is noticed by several people round the table. Her invariable luck, too, is remarked upon. "Stake for me, *mon enfant*," whispered a voice in her ear, and a little pile of five-franc pieces was put in front of her. Madelon, hardly thinking of what she did, staked the stranger's money along with her own on the red. It won. "Thank you, my child; it is the first time I have won to-night," said the voice again, as a long hand covered with rings swept up the money. Madelon turned round quickly: behind her stood a woman with rouged cheeks, a low evening dress half concealed by a black lace shawl, beads and bracelets on her neck and arms—a common figure enough—there were half-a-dozen more such in the room—and she took no more notice of Madelon, but went on pricking her card without speaking to her again. But to the child there came a quick revulsion of feeling, that she could not have explained, as she shrank away from her gaudily-attired neighbor. All at once the game seemed somehow to have lost its interest and excitement; the crowds, the heat, the light, suddenly oppressed her; for the first time her heart gave way. She felt scared, friendless, lonely. There came to her mind the thought of the peaceful faces of the black-robed sisters, a sound as of the tinkling bell ringing above the old cabbage-ground, a breath sweet with the scent of fresh roses in Jeanne-Marie's little garden; she had a momentary impulse to go, to fly somewhere, anywhere—ah! but whither? Whither in all the wide world could she go? Back to the convent to be made a nun? Back to Jeanne-Marie with her promise unfulfilled? "I will keep my promise, I will not be frightened," thinks the poor child, bravely; "I will fancy that papa is in the room, and that he will take care of me." And all these thoughts pass through her head while the croupier is crying, "*Faites votre jeu, Messieurs, faites votre jeu!*" and in, and on she goes again.

And while she is intent on making Monsieur Horace's fortune, Monsieur Horace himself, not five hundred yards off, is walking up and down the Place Royale, listening to the band, and troubling his head not at all about fortune-

making, but very much about Madelon. On his recovery from his illness, he had come to Spa to drink the waters, and had been there nearly a month, during which time he had twice been over to Liége to make inquiries about Madelon. His dismay had been great when, on his first visit to the convent, he had learnt that Mademoiselle Linders was dead, that her little niece had disappeared three or four months before, and that nothing had been heard of her since, with the exception of the vague, anonymous letter from Paris. He wrote off at once to Madame Lavaux, the only person with whom he could imagine Madeleine to have taken refuge; but, as we know, Madame Lavaux had neither seen nor heard anything about her. He had then, in his perplexity, written to her old friends in Florence, thinking it just possible they might be able to give him some information, but with no more success. He received an answer from the American artist, in which he mentioned the death of the old violinist, lamented Madelon's disappearance, but, as may be supposed, gave no news of her.

Graham was greatly annoyed and perplexed. What could have become of the child? To whom could she have gone? She had had no friend but himself when he had last parted from her, and she could hardly, he imagined, have made any outside the convent walls. And why had she run away? Had she been unkindly treated? Why had she not written to him if she were in trouble? These and a hundred other questions he asked himself, reproaching himself the while for not having kept up some kind of communication with her, or with Mademoiselle Linders. He had a real interest in, and affection for, the child, whom he had befriended in her hour of need; and held himself besides in some sort responsible for her welfare, after the promise he had made to her father on his death-bed. What was he to do if all traces of her were indeed lost? This very day he had again been over to Liége, had paid a second visit to the convent, and had made inquiries of every person who probably or improbably might have had news of her, but with no more result than before; and now, as he walked up and down the Place Royale, he was debating in his own mind whether he could take any further steps in

the matter, or whether it must not rather now be left to time and chance to discover her hiding-place.

A shower of rain came on, dispersing the few people who had cared to linger in the open air in this raw, chilly evening; and Horace, leaving the Place, went up the street, which, with its lights and shops, looked cheerfully by comparison, and, like the rest of the world, turned into the Redoute, more than usually full, for it was the race-week, and numbers of strangers had come into the town. The ball-room, where dancing was going on, was crowded; and Graham, who, attracted by the music, had looked in, had soon had enough of the heat and noise. In a few minutes he had made his way into the gambling salon, and had joined one of the silent groups standing round the tables.

Meanwhile, Madelon, once more absorbed in the game, is meditating her grand *coup*. Hitherto she has been playing cautiously, her capital accumulating gradually, but surely, till she has quite a heap of gold and notes before her. It is already a fortune in her eyes, and she thinks if she could only double this all at once, then indeed would the great task be accomplished; she might go then, she might write to Monsieur Horace, she would see him again —ah! what joy, what happiness! Should she venture? Surely it would be very rash to risk all that at once—and yet, if she were to win—and she has been so lucky this evening—her heart leaps up again—she hesitates a moment, then pushes the whole on to the black, reserving only one ten-franc piece, and sits pale, breathless, incapable of moving, during what seemed to her the longest minute of her life. It was only a minute—the croupier dealt the cards—"*Rouge perd, et couleur*," he cried, paid the smaller stakes, and then, counting out gold and notes, pushed over to her what was, in fact, a sufficiently large sum, and which, to her inexperienced eyes, seemed enormous. "Who is she?" asked one or two of the bystanders of each other. "She has been winning all the evening." They shrugged their shoulders; nobody knew. As for Madelon, she heard none of their remarks—she had won, she might go now, go and find Monsieur Horace; and as this thought crossed her mind, she gathered up her winnings, thrust them

into her bag, and rose to depart. As she turned round, she faced Monsieur Horace himself, who had been standing behind her chair, little dreaming whose play it was he had been watching.

She recognized him in a moment, though he had grown thinner and browner since she had last seen him. "Monsieur Horace!—Monsieur Horace!" she cried.

He was still watching the game, but turned at the sound of her voice, and looked down on the excited little face before him. "Madelon!" he exclaimed—"Madelon here!—no, impossible! Madelon!"

"Yes, yes," she said, half laughing, half crying at the same time, "I am Madelon. Ah! come this way—let me show you. I have something to show you this time—you will see, you will see!"

She seized both his hands as she spoke, and pulled him through the crowd into the adjoining reading-room. It was all lighted up, the table strewn with books and papers; but no one was there. Madelon was in a state of wild excitement and triumph.

"Look here," she cried; "I promised to make your fortune, did I not, Monsieur Horace?—and I have done it! Ah! you will be rich now—see here!" she poured the contents of her bag on the table before him. "Are you glad?"

"Glad!—what on earth are you talking about? Where did you get this money, Madelon?"

"Where?—why there, at the tables, to be sure—where else!" she answered, getting frightened at his manner.

"But—gracious powers! are you out of your senses, child?" cried Graham. "Whatever possessed you to come here? What business have you in a place like this? Are you alone?"

"Yes, I am alone. I came to make your fortune," answered Madelon, dismayed.

"My fortune!" he repeated. "What can have put such a notion into your head? As for that money, the sooner you get rid of it the better. What the devil—good heavens! a baby like you!—here, give it to me!"

"What are you going to do?" cried Madelon, struck with sudden fear, as he swept it up in his hand.

"Take it back, of course," he answered, striding into the next room.

"Ah! you shall not!" she cried passionately, running after him, and seizing his hand; "it is mine, it is mine, you shall not have it!"

"Hush, Madelon," he said, turning round sharply, "don't make a disturbance here.

She made no answer, but clung with her whole weight to his arm as he approached the table. She dragged his hand back, she held it tight between hers; her face was quite pale, her teeth set in her childish passion.

"Madelon, let go!" said Graham; "do you hear what I say? Let go!"

"Give me my money back!" she cried, in a passionate whisper; "you have no right to take it; it is my own."

"Let go," he repeated, freeing his hand as he spoke. She seized it again, but it was too late; he had placed the money on the table, and with the other hand pushed it into the middle. A horrible pause, while Madelon clung tighter and tighter, watching breathlessly till she saw the croupier rake in the whole. All was lost, then; she flung Horace's hand away, and rushed out of the room. "Madelon!" he cried, and followed her. Down the lighted staircase, out into the lighted street, he could see the swift little figure darting along the Place Royale, where he had been walking not half an hour ago, all quiet and dark now; the music gone, the people dispersed, the rain falling heavily. Still she ran on, into the avenue of the Promenade à Sept Heures. It was darker still there, only a rare lamp slanting here and there a long gleam of light across the wet path. Horace began to be afraid that he should lose her altogether, but she suddenly stumbled and fell, and when he came up to her, she was sitting all in a heap on the ground at the foot of a tree, her face buried in her hands, her frame shaking with sobs.

"Madelon," said Horace, stooping down, and trying to take her hands; "my little Madelon, my poor little child!"

She jumped up when she heard his voice, and started away from him.

"*Ne me touchez pas, je vous le défends*," she cried, "*ne me touchez pas, je vous déteste—vous êtes un cruel—un perfide!*"

She began to sob again, and dropped down once more upon the ground, crouched upon the damp earth, strewn with dead fallen leaves. Her hat had fallen off, and the rain came down upon her uncovered head, wetting the short hair as it was blown about by the wind, drenching her thin little cloak and old black silk frock. A very pitiful sight as she sat there, a desolate, homeless child, on this dark, wet autumn night, deaf in her excess of childish rage to Horace's words, shaking him off with wilful, passionate gestures whenever he touched her—a very perplexing sight to the young man, who stood and watched her, uncertain what to say or do next.

At last she grew a little quieter, and then he spoke to her in a tone of authority—

"You must get up, Madelon; you will get quite wet if you stay there."

He took hold of her hand, and held it firmly when she tried to loosen it, and at last she got up slowly. As she rose, she became conscious of the wet and cold, and was completely sobered as she stood shivering at Horace's side.

"My poor little Madelon!" he said, in the kind voice she remembered from old times. "You are quite wet, and so cold, we must not stay here; tell me where you are going!"

"I don't know," said Madelon, beginning to cry again. Only an hour ago she had been so full of joy and hope, with such a bright future before her; and now the rain and wind were beating in her face, above her the black sky, darkness all around; where indeed was she going?

"But you have some friends here?" said Horace—"you are not staying here all alone?"

"Yes, I am all alone," said Madelon, sobbing. "Oh! what shall I do?—what shall I do?"

"Don't cry so, Madelon," said Graham, "my poor child, don't be frightened. I will take care of you, but I want you to tell me all about this. Do you mean you are all alone in Spa?"

"Yes, I am all alone; I came here three days ago. I had been ill at Le Trooz, and a woman there—Jeanne-Marie—took care of me; but as soon as I was well and had

money enough, I came to Spa, and went to the Hôtel de Madrid. Papa and I used to go there, and I knew Madame Bertrand, who keeps it."

"So you slept there last night," said Horace, not a little mystified at the story, but trying to elucidate some fact sufficiently plain to act upon.

"Yes, last night, and before. I left my things there, and meant to have gone back to-night, but I have no money now. What is to be done?" That grand question of money, so incomprehensible to children to whom all things seem to come by nature, had long ago been faced by Madelon, but had never before, perhaps, presented itself as a problem so incapable of solution—as a question to be asked of such a very dreary, black, voiceless world, from which no answer could reasonably be expected. But, in truth, the answer was not far off.

"I will take care of all that," said Horace; "so now, come with me. Stay, here is your hat; we must not go without that."

He arranged her disordered hair and crushed hat, and then, taking her hand, led her back towards the town, Madelon very subdued, and miserable and cold, Horace greatly perplexed as to the meaning of it all, but quite resolved not to lose sight of his charge any more.

Arrived at the Hôtel de Madrid, he left Madelon for a moment in the shabby little coffee-room, while he asked to speak to Madame Bertrand. Madame Bertrand, as we know, was ill and in bed, but the maid brought down Madelon's bundle of things. Graham asked her a few questions, but the girl evidently knew nothing about the child. "Madame knew—she had dined in Madame's private room the last two days," but she could not tell anything more about her, and did not even know her name.

When Graham came back to the room, he found Madelon standing listlessly as he had left her; she had not moved. "Well," he said cheerily, "that is settled; now you are my property for the present; you shall sleep at my hotel to-night."

"At your hotel?" she said, looking up at him.

"Yes, where I am staying. You friend here is not well.

I think I shall look after you better. You do not mind coming with me?"

"No, no!" she cried, beginning to cling to him in her old way—"I will go anywhere with you. Indeed I did not mean what I said, but I am very unhappy."

"You are tired and wet," answered Graham, "but we will soon set that to rights; you will see to-morrow, you will not be unhappy at all. Old friends like you and me, Madelon, should not cry at seeing each other again; should they?"

Talking to her in his kind, cheerful way, they walked briskly along till they arrived at the hotel. Madelon was tired out, and he at once ordered a room, fire, and supper for her, and handed her over to the care of a good-natured chambermaid.

"Good night, Madelon. I will come and see after you to-morrow morning," he said smiling, as he left her.

She looked up at him for a moment with a most pitiful, eager longing in her eyes; then suddenly seizing his hands in her wild excited way—"Oh, Monsieur Horace, Monsieur Horace, if I could only tell you!" she cried; and then, as he left the room, and closed the door, she flung herself upon the floor in quite another passion of tears than that she had given way to in the Promenade à Sept Heures.

CHAPTER XVII.

The old Letter.

WHEN Horace went to see after Madelon the next morning, he found her already up and dressed. She opened her bedroom door in answer to his knock, and stood before him, her eyes cast down, her wavy hair all smooth and shining, even the old black silk frock arranged and neat—a very different little Madelon from the passionate, despairing, weeping child of the evening before.

"Good morning, Madelon," said Graham, taking her hand and looking at her with a smile and a gleam in his kind eyes; "how are you to-day? Did you sleep well?"

"I am very well, Monsieur," says Madelon, with her downcast eyes. "I have been up a long time. I have been thinking of what I shall do; I do not know, will you help me?"

"We will talk of that presently," said Graham, "but first we must have some breakfast; come downstairs with me now."

"Monsieur Horace," said Madelon, drawing back, "please I wanted to tell you, I know I was very naughty last night, and I am very sorry;" and she looked up with her eyes full of tears.

"I don't think we either of us quite knew what we were doing last night," said Graham, squeezing her little hand in his; "let us agree to forget it, for the present at all events; I want you to come with me now; there is a lady downstairs who very much wishes to see you."

"To see me?" said Madelon, shrinking back again.

"Yes, don't be frightened, it is only my aunt. She wants to know you, and I think will be very fond of you. Will you come with me?" And then, as they went along the passage and downstairs, he explained to her that he was

not alone at the hotel, but that his aunt, Mrs. Treherne, was also there, and that he had been telling her what old friends he and Madelon were, and how unexpectedly they had met last night.

He opened the door of a sitting-room on the *premier;* a wood-fire was crackling, breakfast was on the table, and before the coffee-pot stood a lady dressed in black.

"Here is Madelon, Aunt Barbara," said Graham; and Mrs. Treherne came forward, a tall, gracious, fair woman, with stately manners, and a beautiful sad face.

"My dear," she said, taking Madelon's hand, "Horace has been telling me about you, and from what he says, I think you and I must become better acquainted. He tells me your name is Madeleine Linders."

"Yes, Madame," says Madelon, rather shyly, and glancing up at the beautiful face, which, with blue eyes and golden hair still undimmed, might have been that of some fair saint or Madonna, but for a certain chilling expression of cold sadness.

"I knew something of a Monsieur Linders once," said Mrs. Treherne, "and I think he must have been your father, my dear. Your mother was English, was she not? Can you tell me what her name was before she married?"

"I—I do not know," said Madelon; "she died when I was quite a baby."

"Nearly thirteen years ago, that would be? Yes, that is as I thought; but have you never heard her English name, never seen it written? Have you nothing that once belonged to her?"

"Yes, Madame," answered Madelon; "there is a box at the convent that was full of things, clothes, and some books. There was a name written in them—ah! I cannot remember it—it was English."

"Moore?" asked Mrs. Treherne. "Stay, I will write it. Magdalen Moore—was that it?"

"Yes," said Madelon; "I think it was—yes, I know it was. I remember the letters now. But I have something of hers here, too," she added—"a letter, that I found in the pocket of this dress—this was mamma's once, and it was in the trunk. Shall I fetch it?—it is upstairs."

"Yes, I should like to see it, my dear. You will wonder at all these questions, but, if I am not mistaken, your mother was a very dear friend of mine."

Madelon left the room, and Mrs. Treherne, sitting down at the table, began to arrange her breakfast-cups. Horace was standing with one arm on the mantel-piece, gazing into the fire; he had been silent during this short interview, but as Madelon disappeared—

"Is she at all like her mother?" he inquired.

"She is like—yes, certainly she is like; her eyes remind me of Magdalen's—and yet she is unlike, too."

"You must be prepared," said Horace, after a moment's pause, "to find her devoted to her father's memory; and not without reason, I must say, for he was devoted to her, after his own fashion. She thinks him absolute perfection; and, in fact, I believe this escapade of hers to have been entirely founded on precedents furnished by him."

"I think it is the most dreadful thing I ever heard of," said Mrs. Treherne—"a child of that age alone in such a place!"

"Well, I really don't know," answered Graham, half laughing. "I don't suppose it has done her much mischief; and of this I am quite sure, that she had no idea of there being any more harm in going to a gambling-table than in going for a walk."

"That appears to me the worst part of it, that a child should have been brought up in such ignorance of right and wrong. However, she can be taught differently."

"Certainly; but don't you think the teaching had better come gradually?—it would break her heart, to begin with, to be told her father is not everything she imagines—if indeed she could be made to understand it just yet, which I doubt."

"Of course it would be cruel to shake a child's faith in her father," answered Mrs. Treherne; "but she must learn it in time. Monsieur Linders was one of the most worthless men that ever lived, and Charles Moore was as bad, if not worse. I wonder—good heavens, Horace, how one wonders at such things!—I wonder what Magdalen had done that she should be left to the mercy of two such men as those."

"Well, it is no fault of Madelon's, at any rate," Horace

began; and then stopped, as the door opened, and Madelon came in. In her hand she carried a queer little bundle of treasures, that she had brought away with her from the convent—the old German's letter, the two that Horace had sent her, and one or two other things, all tied together with a silk thread.

"This is the letter," she said, selecting one from the packet and giving it to Mrs. Treherne. It was the one she had read in the evening twilight in her convent cell last May. "I am afraid there is no name on it, for there is no beginning nor ending. I think it must have been burnt."

"Why, that is your writing, Aunt Barbara!" said Graham, who had come forward to inspect these relics.

"Yes, it is mine," said Mrs. Treherne. "It was written by me many years ago."

She glanced at the letter as she spoke, then crushed it up quickly in her hand, and with a sudden flush on her pale cheek turned to Madelon.

"My dear," she said, putting one arm round the child's waist, and caressing her hair with the other hand, "I knew your mother very well; she was my cousin, and the very dearest friend I ever had. I think you must come and live with me, and be my child, as there is no one else who has any claim on you."

"Did you know mamma, Madame?" said Madelon. "And papa—did you know him too?"

"No, my dear, I never knew your father," said Mrs. Treherne, with a change in her voice, and relaxing her hold of the child.

"You forget, Madelon," said Graham, coming to the rescue, "your father never went to England, so he did not make acquaintance with your mother's friends. But that is not the question now; my aunt wants to know if you will not come and live with her in England, and be her little girl? That would be pleasanter than the convent, would it not?"

"Yes, thank you. I should like to go and live in England very much," said Madelon, her eyes wandering wistfully from Mrs. Treherne to Graham. "And with you, too, Monsieur Horace?" she added, quickly.

"Not with me, exactly," he answered, taking her hand in his; "for I am going off to America in a month or two; and you know we agreed that you and I could not go about the world together; but I shall often hear of you, and from you, and be quite sure that you are happy; and that will be a great thing, will it not?"

"Yes, thank you," she said again. Her eyes filled with sudden tears, but they did not fall. It was a very puzzling world in which she found herself, and events, which only yesterday she had thought to guide after her own fashion, had escaped quite beyond the control of her small hand.

Perhaps Mrs. Treherne saw how bewildered she was, for she drew her towards her again, and kissed her, and told her that she was her child now, and that she would take care of her, and love her for her mother's sake.

"Now let us have some breakfast," she said. "After that we will see what we have to do, for I am going to leave Spa to-morrow."

Late in the afternoon of the same day, Horace, who had been out since the morning, coming into the sitting-room, found Madelon there alone. It was growing dark, and she was sitting in a big arm-chair by the fire, her eyes fixed on the crackling wood, her hands lying listlessly in her lap. She hardly looked up, or stirred as Graham came in, and drew a chair to her side.

"Well, Madelon," he said, cheerfully, "so we start for England to-morrow?"

"Yes," she said; but there was no animation in her manner.

"Has my aunt told you?" he went on. "We are going to sleep at Liége, so that she may go to the convent, and settle matters there finally, and let the nuns know they are not to expect you back again."

"Yes, I know," said Madelon. "Monsieur Horace, do you think we might stop for just a little while—for half-an-hour—at Le Trooz, to see Jeanne-Marie? She would not like me to go away without wishing her good-bye."

"Of course we will. It was Jeanne-Marie who took care of you when you were ill, was it not? Tell me the whole story, Madelon. What made you run away from Liége?"

"There was a fever in the convent; I caught it, and Aunt Thérèse died; and when I was getting well I heard the nuns talking about it, and saying I was to live in the convent always, and be made a nun—and I could not, oh! I could not—papa said I was never to be a nun, and it would have been so dreadful; and I could not have kept my promise to you either."

"What was this promise, Madelon; I can't remember your making me one, or anything about it."

"Yes, don't you know? That evening at Liége, the night before I went into the convent, when we were taking a walk. You said you wanted to make your fortune, and I said I would do it for you. I knew how, and I thought you did not. I meant to do it at once, but I could not, and I was afraid you would think I had forgotten the promise, and would want the money, so I got out of the window and came to Spa. But I lost all my money the first time I went to the tables, and there was a lady who wanted to take me back to the convent; but she went to sleep in the train, and I got out at Le Trooz. I don't remember much after that, for the fever came on again; but Jeanne-Marie, who keeps a restaurant in the village, found me in the church, she says, and took me home, and nursed me till I was well."

"And how long ago was all this?"

"It was last May that I ran away from the convent, and I was with Jeanne-Marie all the summer; but as soon as I was well again, and had enough money, I came back here—that was four days ago; and last night I had the money, and to-day I should have written to you to tell you that I had kept my promise, and made your fortune."

"And so it was all for me," said Graham, with a sudden pang of tenderness and remorse. "My poor little Madelon, you must have thought me very cruel and unkind last night."

"Never mind," she answered, "you did not understand; I thought you knew I had promised;" but she turned away her head as she spoke, and Graham saw that she was crying.

"Indeed I don't remember anything about it," he said; "why, my poor child, I should never have thought of such a thing. Well, never mind, Madelon, you shall come to

England with us. Do you know you are a sort of cousin of mine?"

"Am I?" she answered, "did you know mamma as well as Mrs.—— as Madame *votre Tante?*"

"Well, no; the fact is, I never even heard her married name, though I knew we had some relations named Moore, for she was my mother's cousin, also. But she went abroad and married when I was quite a child, and died a few years afterwards, and that is how it happened that I never heard of, or saw her."

"Ah! well, you knew papa," said Madelon; and then there was silence between them for a minute, till a flame leaping up showed Madelon's face all tearful and woe-begone.

"You are not happy, Madelon," said Graham. "What is it? Can I help you in any way? Is there anything I can do for you?"

She fairly burst into sobs as he spoke.

"Monsieur Horace," she answered, "I—I *wanted* to make your fortune; I had looked forward to it for such a long time, and I was so happy when I had done it, and I thought you would be so pleased and glad, too, and now it is all at an end—"

How was Graham to console her? How explain it all to her? "Listen to me, Madelon," he said at last; "I think you were a dear little girl to have such a kind thought for me, and I don't know how to thank you enough for it; but it was all a mistake, and you must not fret about it now. I don't think I care so very much about having a fortune; and anyhow, I like working hard and getting money that way for myself."

"But mine is the best and quickest way," said Madelon, unconvinced; "it was what papa always did."

"Yes, but you know everybody does not set to work the same way, and I think I like mine best for myself."

"Do you?" she said, looking at him wistfully; "and may I not go and try again, then?"

"No, no," he answered kindly; "that would not do at all, Madelon; it does not do for little girls to run about the world making fortunes. Your father used to take you

to those rooms, but he would not have liked to have seen you there alone last night, and you must never go again."

He tried to speak lightly, but the words aroused some new consciousness in the child, and she colored scarlet.

"I—I did not know—" she began; and then stopped suddenly, and never again spoke of making Monsieur Horace's fortune.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Partings.

So it was something like the end of a fairy tale after all; for a carriage stopped before the restaurant at Le Trooz, and out of it came a gentleman, and a lady beautiful enough to be a fairy godmother, and the little wandering Princess herself, no other than our Madelon, who ran up to Jeanne-Marie as she came to the door, and clasping her round the neck, clung to her more tightly than she had ever clung before, till the woman, disengaging herself, turned to speak to her other visitors. Mrs. Treherne came into the little public room, which happened to be empty just then, and sitting down on one of the wooden chairs, began to talk to Jeanne-Marie; while Madelon, escaping, made her way to the garden at the back, where she had spent so many peaceful hours. It was not a week since she had been there, and it looked all unchanged; the sun was shining again after the last few days, and filling the air with summer heat and radiance; the grapes were ripening on the wall; the bees humming among the flowers: Jeanne-Marie's pot and pans stood in the kitchen window. How quiet, and sunny, and familiar it looked! Madelon half expected to find her chair set in the old shady corner, to see Jeanne-Marie's face appearing through the screen of vine-leaves at the open window, to hear her voice calling to her to leave her work, and come and help her make the soup! Ah no, it was not all unchanged; was there indeed anything the same as in the old days that already seemed such ages distant, the old time gone for ever? With a sudden pang, Madelon turned away, and went quickly up the outside staircase, all overgrown with unpruned sprays and tendrils, into the room she had occupied for so many weeks. How happy she had been there! what dreams she had

dreamed! what hopes she had cherished! what visions she had indulged in! Where were they all now? Where was that golden future to which she had so confidently looked forward, for which she had worked, and striven, and ventured all? She knelt down by the bed, flinging her arms out over the coarse blue counterpane. Ah, if she had but died there, died while she was all unconscious, before this cruel grief and disappointment had come upon her!

And meanwhile, Jeanne-Marie, in the room below, had been hardening her heart against the child after her own fashion. She had answered Mrs. Treherne's questions curtly, rejected the faintest suggestion of money as an insult, and stood eyeing Graham defiantly while the talk went on. "Madelon has grand new friends now," she was thinking all the time very likely, "and will go away and be happy, and forget all about me; well, let her go—what does it matter?" And then presently going upstairs to look for this happy, triumphant Madelon, she found her crouching on the floor, trying to stifle the sound of her despairing sobs.

"Oh, Jeanne-Marie, Jeanne-Marie!" she cried, as soon as she could speak, "I wish I might stay with you, I wish I had never gone away; what was the use of it all? I thought I was going to be so happy, and now I am to go to England, and Monsieur Horace is to go to America, and I shall never, never, be happy again!"

"What was the use of what?" says Jeanne-Marie, taking the child into her kind arms; "why will you never be happy again? Are they unkind to you? Is that gentleman downstairs Monsieur Horace that you used to talk about?"

"Yes, that is Monsieur Horace. Ah, no, he is not unkind, he is kinder than any one—you do not understand, Jeanne-Marie, and I cannot tell you, but I am very unhappy." She put her arms round the woman's neck, and hid her face on her shoulder. In truth, Jeanne-Marie did not understand what all this terrible grief and despair were about. Madelon, as we know, had never confided her hopes, and plans, and wishes to her; but she knew that the child whom she loved better than all the world was in trouble, and that she must send her away without being able to say a word to comfort her, and that seemed hard to bear.

So they sat silent for awhile; and then Jeanne-Marie got up.

"You must go, *ma petite*," she said; "Madame is waiting, and I came to fetch you." She walked to the door, and then turned round suddenly. "*Ecoutez, mon enfant*," she said, placing her two hands on Madelon's shoulders, and looking down into her face, "you will not forget me? I—I should not like to think you will go away and forget me."

"Never!" cried Madelon; "how could I? I will never forget you, Jeanne-Marie, and some day, if I can I will come back and see you."

So they parted, and, of the two, it was the brave, faithful heart of the woman that suffered the sharper pang, though she went about her daily work without saying a word or shedding a tear.

Mrs. Treherne had large estates in Cornwall, on which, since her husband's death, she had almost constantly resided; and thither, with Madelon, she proceeded, a few days after their arrival in London. Graham did not go with them. He had been appointed to accompany a government exploring party into Central America, and his time was fully occupied with business to settle, arrangements to make, outfit to purchase, and, moreover, with running down to his sister's house in the country as often as possible, so as to devote every spare hour to Miss Leslie. The summer love-making had ended in an engagement before he started for Spa—an engagement which—neither he nor Miss Leslie having any money to speak of—promised to be of quite indefinite length. In the midst of all his bustle, however, Graham contrived to take Madelon to as many sights as could be crowded into the three or four days that they stayed at the London hotel; and in a thousand kind ways tried to encourage and cheer the child, who never said a word about her grief, but drooped more and more as the moment for separation drew near. Graham went to see her and his aunt off at the Great Western terminus, and it was amid all the noise, and hurry, and confusion of a railway-station that they parted at last. It was all over in a minute, and as Graham stood on the platform, watching the train

move slowly out of the station, a little white face appeared at a carriage-window, two brown eyes gazed wistfully after him, a little hand waved one more farewell. It was his last glimpse of our small Madelon.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

Letters.

For five years Horace Graham was a wanderer on the other side of the Atlantic. He had left England with the intention of remaining abroad for two years only; but at the end of that time, when the exploring party to which he belonged was returning home, he did not find it difficult to make excuses for remaining behind. He had only begun to see the country, he said in his letters to England; he knew two men who were going further south, to Paraguay, to La Plata, to Patagonia, perhaps; and he meant to accompany them, and see what was to be seen; time enough to think of coming home afterwards; of what use would it be for him to return just then? "We are both young," he wrote to his future wife, Maria Leslie, "and can well afford to wait a year or two before settling down into sober married life. You, my dear Maria, who so often said this to me when, in the first days of our engagement, I urged a speedy marriage, will, I know, agree with me. I see now that in those days you were right and I was wrong. We are not rich enough to marry. I should do wrong to make you submit to all the trials and hardships which struggling poverty entails; though indeed, in all the world, I know of no one so well fitted to meet them as my dearest Molly. How often we used to picture to ourselves some little snuggery where you could knit and darn stockings, and I could smoke my pipe! Is not that the correct division of labor between man and woman? Well, some day we will have some such dear little

hole, and I will smoke my pipe; but you shall not be condemned to stitching—you shall do—let me see—what shall you do?—anything in the world you like best, my dear girl; for I mean to be a rich man in those days, which I often picture to myself as the good time coming, to which some of us are looking forward. When I hear of an opening in England, I shall return—perhaps sooner, if it is very long in coming; unless, indeed, you would like to join me out here. What do you think of that proposal? We could settle down comfortably in Peru or Mexico, and you could make friend among the Spanish ladies, and learn from them to sleep all day and dance all night, unless you would prefer to accompany my pipe with your cigarette; for, of course, you too would smoke, like every one else. And from time to time we could go on long expeditions—such as I am making now—day and night in an open boat, on some river flowing through trackless forests, great trees dipping down into the water, strange flowers blooming overhead, strange beasts that one never saw before, hopping and rushing about; and mosquitoes, of which one has seen plenty, eating one up alive at every opportunity. My poor Molly! I can see your face of dismay. No, don't be afraid; you shall not be asked to leave your own comfortable home till I can return and take you to as good a one; and then I mean to write a book about my adventures, and you shall do nothing worse than shudder over them at your leisure at our own fireside."

To which Maria replied:—"I think, my dear Horace, you are quite right not to hurry home. As you say, we are both young, and have life before us; and do not trouble yourself about me, for as long as I hear that you are well and happy, I can and ought to desire nothing further. The idea of coming out to you made me shiver indeed; you will say I am very unenterprising, but I don't think I should ever care about leaving England; one is so happy here, what more can one desire? What can I tell you in return for your long letter? Georgie will have given you all the village news, no doubt; has she told you that we have a new curate—Mr. Morris? He preached last Sunday, and is a great improvement on Mr. Saunders, who was the dullest man I ever heard. The school gets on nicely; I have two more

pupils, and receive many compliments, I assure you, on the way in which I manage my class. I sometimes wonder if it could not be arranged some day, that you should enter into partnership with Dr. Vavasour, who is growing old, and gets tired with his day's work? I often think of this, and of how pleasant it would be, but, as you may suppose, have never even hinted at it to your sister. Is it such a very wild castle in the air? It is a very pleasant one, and I sometimes sit and think it all over. We should never have to leave Ashurst then; there is a pretty little house lately built at the end of the village, which would just suit us, I think; you could write your book, and when it was done, read it to me, as you know I do not much care about reading. You should smoke your pipe as much as you please, and I would sit and work, for there is nothing I like doing better, and I should find it very uncomfortable to sit with my hands before me. Do you think I mean to grow idle in my old age? No, not if we have a hundred thousand a-year, for I am sure there must be always something for every one to do," and so on; a little moral sentiment closed the letter.

When Graham received it he read it over twice, and sighed a little as he folded it up and put it away. He was relieved that Maria should take such a calm view of the subject, for he had felt his own letter to be somewhat egotistical, and yet—well, right or wrong, he could not help it; he *could* not give up his travels and researches just then. The spirit of adventure was upon him, driving him, as it has driven many a man before, further and further into the wilderness; heedless of danger, and hardships, and discomfort; almost heedless, too, of home, and friends, and love—all that, he would have time to think of at some future day, when he should find himself obliged to return to England. Maria's suggestion of the country partnership as the goal of his ambition and his hopes, her picture of the new house at the end of the village, rose before his mind, but in no such tempting light as before hers. "She is a dear, good girl," he thought, "but she does not understand. Well, I suppose it will come to that, or something like that, at least; what better can one look forward to? one cannot roam about the world for ever—at least, I cannot, bound as

I am; not that I repent that;" and then it was that he sighed. Nevertheless, he did roam about for three years longer; and then his health giving way, he was obliged to return to England, and arrived at his sister's house, a bronzed, meagre, bearded traveller, with his youth gone for ever, and years of life, and adventure, and toil separating him from the lad who had first seen little Madelon at Chaudfontaine.

He had not forgotten her; it would have been strange indeed if he had, for Mrs. Treherne's letters, which followed him in his wanderings with tolerable regularity, were apt to be full of Madeleine; and in them would often be enclosed a sheet, on which, in her cramped foreign handwriting, Madelon would have recorded, for Monsieur Horace's benefit, the small experiences of her every-day life.

"I am learning very hard," so these little effusions would run; "and Aunt Barbara says that I advance in my studies, but that I shall do better when I go to London, for I will have masters then, and go to classes. I like Cornwall very much; I have a garden of my own, but the flowers will not grow very well—the gardener says the wind from the sea will kill them. It seems to me there is always a wind here, and last week there was a great storm, and many ships were wrecked. Aunt Barbara said she was glad you were the other side of the ocean, and so indeed was I. I never thought the wind and sea could make so much noise; it is not here as at Nice with the Mediterranean, which was almost always calm, and tranquil, and blue like the sky. Here the sea is gray like the sky—that makes a great difference. Will you soon write to me once more? I read your letter to me over and over again. I like to hear all about the strange countries you are in, and I should like to see them too. We have a book of travels which tells us all about South America, and I read it very often. I send you one little primrose that I gathered to-day in my garden."

Again, nearly a year later:

"I do not know how people can like to live always in one place, when there is so much that is beautiful to see in the world. Aunt Barbara says that she would be content always to live in Cornwall; and it is very kind of her to

come to London, for it is that I may have masters, she says but I cannot help being glad, for I was so tired of the rocks, and the sea always the same. We arrived last week, and Aunt Barbara says we shall stay the whole winter, and come back every year, very likely. I like our house very much; it is in Westminster, not far from the Abbey, where I went with you; one side looks on to the street, that is rather dull; but the other looks on to St. James' Park, where I go to walk with Aunt Barbara. We went to the Abbey last Sunday; it reminded me of the churches abroad, and the singing was so beautiful. In Cornwall there was only a fiddle and a cracked flute, and everybody sang out of tune; I did not like going to church there at all. Please write to me soon, Monsieur Horace, and tell me where you are, and what you are doing; I fancy it all to myself—the big forests, and the rivers, and the flowers, and everything."

Accompanying these would be Mrs. Treherne's reports:

"Madeleine improves every day, I think. She is much grown, and resembles her mother more and more, though she will never be so beautiful, to my mind; she has not, and never will have, Magdalen's English air and complexion. She gets on well with her London masters and classes, and has great advantages in many ways over girls of her own age, especially in her knowledge of foreign languages. I trust that by degrees the memory of her disastrous past may fade away; we never speak of it, and she is so constantly employed, and seems to take so much interest in her occupation and studies, that I hope she is ceasing to think of old days, and will grow up the quiet, English girl I could wish to see Magdalen's daughter. Indeed she is almost too quiet and wanting in the gayety and animation natural to girls of her age; but otherwise I have not a fault to find with her. She is fond of reading, and gets hold of every book of travels she can hear of, that will give her any idea of the country you are exploring. We share your letters, my dear Horace, and follow you in all your wanderings, with the greatest interest."

One more letter:

March 1st, 186–.

MY DEAR MONSIEUR HORACE:

"Aunt Barbara bids me write and welcome you back to England

We look forward to seeing you very much; but she says, if you can remain with your sister a week longer, it will be better than coming down to Cornwall now, as we shall be in London on Monday next, at the latest. We should have come up to town for Christmas as usual if Aunt Barbara had not been so unwell; and now that she is strong again, she wishes to be there as soon as possible. It would not be worth while, therefore, for you to make so long a journey just now. I hope you will come and see us soon; it seems a long, long time since you went away—more than five years.

"Ever your affectionate

"MADELEINE LINDERS."

It was at the end of a dull March day that Horace Graham, just arrived from Kent, made his way to his aunt's house in Westminster. He thought more of Madelon than of Mrs. Treherne, very likely, as the cab rattled along from the station. There had never been much affection or sympathy between him and his aunt, although he had always been grateful to her, for her kindness to him as a boy; but she was not a person who inspired much warmth of feeling, and his sister's little house in the village where he had been born, had always appeared to him more home-like than the great Cornwall house, where, as a lad, he had been expected to spend the greater part of his holidays. But he was pleased with the idea of seeing his little Madelon again. He had not needed letters to remind him of her during all these years; he had often thought of the child whom he had twice rescued in moments of desolation and peril, and who had been the heroine of such a romantic little episode—thought of her and her doings with a sort of wonder sometimes, at her daring, her independence, her devotion—and all for him! When Graham thought of this, he felt very tender towards his foolish, rash, loving little Madelon; he felt so now, as he drove along to Westminster; he would not realize how much she must be altered; she came before him always as the little pale-faced girl, with short curly hair, in a shabby black silk frock. It was a picture that, somehow, had made itself a sure resting-place in Graham's heart.

"We did not expect you till the late train, sir; it is close upon dinner-time, and the ladies are upstairs in the drawing-room, I believe," said the old butler who opened the door.

"Upstairs in the drawing-room?" said Graham; "stop I will find my way, Burchett, if you will look after my things."

He ran upstairs; the house was strange to him, but a door stood open on the first landing, and going in, he found himself in a drawing-room, where the firelight glowed and flickered on picture-lined walls, and chintz-covered easy-chairs and sofas, on an open piano, on flower-stands filled with hyacinths and crocuses, on the windows looking out on the dark March night, and the leafless trees in the Park. No one was there—he saw that at a glance, as he looked round on the warm, firelit scene; but even as he ascertained the fact, some one appeared, coming through the curtains that hung over the folding-doors between the two drawing-rooms—some one who gave a great start when she saw him, and then came forward blushing and confused. "My aunt is upstairs,"—she began, then stopped suddenly, glancing up at this stranger with the lean brown face, and long rough beard. "Monsieur Horace!" she cried, springing forward. He saw a tall, slim girl, all in soft flowing white, he saw two hands stretched out in joyous welcome, he saw two brown eyes shining with eager gladness and surprise; and all at once the old picture vanished from his mind, and he knew that this was Madelon.

CHAPTER II.

Sehnsucht.

GRAHAM had numberless engagements in London, and except at breakfast, or at lunch perhaps, little was seen of him at his aunt's house during the first days after his arrival in town. One evening, however, coming home earlier than usual, he found the two ladies still in the drawing-room, and joining them at the fireside, he first made Madelon sing to him, and then, beginning to talk, the conversation went on till long after midnight, as he sat relating his travels and adventures. Presently he brought out his journal, and read extracts from it, filling up the brief, hurried notes with fuller details as he went on, and describing to them the plan of his book, some chapters of which were already written, and which he hoped to bring out before the season was over. Mrs. Treherne was a perfect listener; she was sufficiently well informed to make it worth while to tell her more, and she knew how to put intelligent questions just at the right moment. As for Madelon, she had been busily engaged on some piece of embroidery when he first began talking, but gradually her hands had dropped into her lap, and with her eyes fixed on him in the frankest unconsciousness, she had become utterly absorbed in what he was saying. Graham's whole heart was in his work, past and present, and this rapt naïve interest on the part of the girl at once flattered and encouraged him.

"I can trust you two," he said putting away his papers at last, "and I am not forestalling my public too much in letting you hear all this; but you are my first auditors, and my first critics. You won't betray me, Madelon?" he added, turning to her with a smile.

She shook her head, smiling back at him without speak-

ing; and then, rising, began to fold up her work, while Mrs. Treherne said:

"I should have thought you would have found your first audience at Ashurst."

"I did try it one evening," he said, but one of the children began to scream, and Georgie had to go and attend to it; and the Doctor went to sleep, and Maria, who had been all the afternoon in a stuffy school-room, looking after a school-feast or something of the sort, told me not to mind her, and presently went to sleep too; so I gave it up after that."

"It was certainly not encouraging," said Mrs. Treherne; "but you must surely have fallen upon an unfortunate moment; they do not go to sleep every evening, I presume?"

He did not answer; he was looking at Madelon, his eyes following her as she moved here and there about the room, putting away her work, closing the piano, setting things in order for the night. It was a habit he had taken up, this of watching her whenever they were in the room together, wondering perhaps how his little Madelon had grown into one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen. Indeed she was little Madelon no longer—and yet not wholly altered after all. She was tall now, above the middle height, and her hair was a shade darker, and fastened up in long plaits at the back of her head; but her cheeks were pale as in old days, and a slight accent, an occasional idiom, something exceptional in style, and gesture, and manner, showed at once and unmistakably, her foreign birth and breeding. As Mrs. Treherne had once said, she had not, and never would have, an English air and complexion; but her beauty was not the less refined and rare that the clear, fair cheeks were without a tinge of color, that one had to seek it in the pure red lips, the soft brown hair, the slight eyebrows and dark lashes, the lovely eyes that had learnt to express the thought they had once only suggested, but still retained something of the old, childish, wistful look. And yet Graham watched her with a vague sense of disappointment.

"What do you think of Madeleine?" Mrs. Treherne said to him the following afternoon; he had come in early, and they were together alone in the drawing-room. "Do

you not find her grown and improved? Do you think her pretty? She is perhaps rather pale, but—"

"She has certainly grown, Aunt Barbara, but that is not astonishing—young ladies generally do grow between the ages of thirteen and eighteen: and I think her the prettiest girl I ever saw—not at all too pale. As for being improved—well—I suppose she is. She wears very nice dresses, I observe, and holds herself straight, and I daresay knows more geography and history than when we last parted."

"You are disappointed in her," said Mrs. Treherne. "Do you know I suspected as much, Horace, from the way in which you look at her and speak to her. Tell me in what way—why you are not satisfied?"

"But I am satisfied," cried Graham; "why should I not be? Madelon appears to me to have every accomplishment a young lady should have; she sings to perfection, I daresay, dances equally well, and I have no doubt that on examination she would prove equally proficient in all the ologies. I am perfectly satisfied, so far as it is any concern of mine, but I don't see what right I have to be sitting in judgment one way or the other."

"You have every right, Horace; I have always looked upon you as the child's guardian in a way, and in all my plans concerning her education I have considered myself, to a certain extent, responsible to you."

"It was very good of you, Aunt Barbara, to consider me in the matter. I thought my responsibility had ceased from the moment you took charge of her; but for her father's sake—does Madelon ever speak of him, by-the-bye?"

"Never."

"Never alludes to her past life?"

"Never—we never speak of it; I have carefully avoided doing so, in the hope that with time, and a settled home, and new interests, she would cease to think of it altogether, and I trust I have succeeded. The memory of it can only be painful to her now, poor child, for, though I have never referred to the subject in any way, I feel convinced she must have learnt by this time to see her father's character in its true light."

"It is possible," said Graham. "Well, as I was saying,

Aunt Barbara, for the sake of the promise I made her father on his death-bed, if for no other reason, I shall and must always take an interest in Madelon."

"And I for her mother's sake," replied Mrs. Treherne, stiffly. "If you have no other interest in Madelon than—however, it is useless to discuss that. I want to know how we have disappointed you—Madelon and I—for you are disappointed; tell me, Horace—I am really anxious to know."

"Dear Aunt Barbara, I am not at all disappointed; or, if I am, it is not your fault or hers—quite the reverse. Nothing but the perversity of human nature. Shall I own the truth? All these years I have kept in my mind a dear little girl in a shabby old frock which she had outgrown—a dear, affectionate little soul, with so few ideas on people and things, that she actually took me for one of the best and wisest of human beings. See how much vanity there is in it all! I come back, and find a demure, well-drilled, fashionable young lady. I might have known how it would be, but it gave me a sort of shock, I own—my little wild Madelon gone for ever and a day, and this proper young lady in her place."

"You are unreasonable, Horace," said Mrs. Treherne, half laughing, half vexed; "and ungrateful too, when Madelon has been working so hard, with the hope, I know, of pleasing and astonishing you with her doings."

"But I am pleased," said Graham. "Astonished? No, I cannot be astonished that Madelon, with you to help her, should accomplish anything; but I am delighted, charmed. What more shall I say? So much so, Aunt Barbara, that when I am married—as I mean to be shortly, and set up a house of my own—you and Madelon will have to to pay me visits of any length. I *shall* always feel that I have a sort of property in her, through early associations."

"Are you going to be married shortly?" said Mrs. Treherne; "have you anything definite to do! Where are you going to settle?"

"Do you not know?" he answered, "Dr. Vavasour has offered me a partnership."

"And you have accepted it?"

"Not yet. He has given me six months to think it over;

so I need not hurry my decision; and, in the meantime, I have plenty to do with my book. In fact, I need the rest."

"It seems a pity—" began Mrs. Treherne.

"What seems a pity, Aunt Barbara?"

"That with your talents you should settle down for life in a country village. You could surely do something better."

"I don't know," he answered with a sigh. "There is nothing else very obvious at present, and I cannot be a rover all my life. For one thing, my health would not allow of my taking up that sort of thing again just at present; and then there is Maria to be considered. She hates the idea of leaving Ashurst, and it has been her dream for years that this partnership should be offered me, and that I should accept it. I owe it to her to settle down into steady married life before long."

He rose, as he said these last words, and walked to the window. Mrs. Treherne was called away at the same moment, and he stood gazing out at the strip of garden before the house, the Birdcage Walk beyond, the trees in the Park blowing about against the dull sky. His thoughts were not there; they had wandered away to the tropics, to the glowing skies, the strange lands, the wild, free life in which his soul delighted. He was glad to find himself in England once more, among kindred and friends, but he loathed the thought of being henceforth tied down to a life from which all freedom would be banished, which must be spent in the dull routine of a country parish. Graham was not now the lad who had once looked on the world as lying at his feet, on all possibilities as being within his grasp; he had long ceased to be a hero in his own eyes; he had learnt one of life's sternest lessons, he had touched the limits of his own powers. But in thus gaining the knowledge of what he could not do, he had also proved what he could do—he had recognized the bent of his genius, and he knew that of all the mistakes of his life he had committed none more grievous than that of binding himself to a woman who neither sympathized nor pretended to sympathize with him and his pursuits; and in compliance with whose wishes he was preparing to take up the life for which, of all others within the limits of his profession, he felt himself the least suited.

And she? Did she care for him?—did she love him enough to make it worth the sacrifice?—was there the least chance of their ever being happy together? Ah! what lovers' meeting had that been that had passed between them at his sister's house! What half-concealed indifference on her side, what embarrassment on his, what silence falling between them, what vain efforts to shake off an ever-increasing coldness and restraint! It was five years since they had parted—was it only years and distance that had estranged them, or had they been unsuited to each other from the beginning? Not even now would Graham acknowledge to himself that it was so, but it was a conviction he had been struggling against for years.

"Will you take some tea, Monsieur Horace?" said a voice behind him. He turned round. The gray daylight was fading into gray dusk, afternoon tea had been brought in, and Madelon was standing by him with a cup in her hand. "Aunt Barbara has gone out, and will not be home till dinner-time," she added, as she returned to the tea-table and fireside.

"Then you and I will drink tea together, Madelon," said Graham, seating himself in an arm-chair opposite to her. "Where have you been all this afternoon? Have you been out too?"

"I have been to a singing-class. I generally go twice a week when we are in town."

"And do you like it?"

"Yes, I like it very much."

So much they said, and then a silence ensued. Madelon drank her tea, and Graham sat looking at her. Yes, a change had certainly come over her—this Madelon, who came and went so quietly, with a certain harmonious grace in every movement—this Madelon who sometimes smiled, but rarely laughed, who spoke little, and then with an air of vague weariness and indifference—this was not the little impetuous, warm-hearted Madelon he remembered, who had clung to him in her childish sorrow, who had turned from him in her childish anger, who in her very wilfulness, in her very abandonment to the passion of the moment, had been so winning and lovable. It was not merely that she was

not gay—gayety was an idea that he had never associated with Madelon; it had always been a sad little face that had come before him when he had thought of her; but in all her sadness, there had been an animation and spring, an eagerness and effusion in the child, that seemed wholly wanting in the girl. It was as if a subtle shadow had crept over her, toning down every characteristic light to its own gray monotonous tint.

Madelon had not the smallest suspicion of what was passing in her companion's mind. During all these years, in whatever other respects she might have altered, the attitude of her heart towards him had never changed. What he had always been to her, he was now; the time that had elapsed since they had parted had but intensified and deepened her old feeling towards him—that was all. He had been in her thoughts day and night; in a thousand ways she had worked, she had striven, that he might find her improved when he came home, less ignorant, less unworthy, than the little girl he had parted with. His return had been the one point to which all her hopes had been directed; and, poor child, with a little unconscious egotism, she took it for granted that just then she occupied almost as large a share in Graham's mind as he did in hers. He had always been so good, so kind to her, he must surely be glad to see her again, almost as glad as she was to see him. She, on her side, was ready to go on just where they had left off; and yet now, when for the first time they were alone together, a sort of shyness had taken possession of her.

She was the first to break the silence, however. "Why do you look at me so?" she said, setting her tea-cup down, and turning to Horace with a sudden smile and blush.

"I am trying to adjust my ideas," he answered smiling too; "I am trying to reconcile the little Madelon I used to know with this grand young lady I have found here."

"Ah, you will never see that little Madelon again," said the girl, shaking her head rather sorrowfully; "she is gone for ever."

"How is that?" said Graham. "You have grown tall, you wear long gowns, and plait up your hair, I see; but is that a reason—"

"Ah, how can one survive one's old life?" said Madelon, plaintively; "one ought not, ought one? All is so changed with me, things are so different, the old days are so utterly gone—I try not to think of them any more; that is the best; and my old self is gone with them, I sometimes think—and that is best too."

She sat leaning forward, staring at the dull red coals; and Graham was silent for a moment.

"Then you have forgotten the old days altogether?" he said at last.

"I never speak of them," she answered slowly; "no I have not forgotten—it is not in me to forget, I think—but I do not speak of them; of what use? It is like a dream now, that old time, and no one cares for one's dreams but oneself."

"Am I part of the dream too, Madelon? For I think I belong more to that old time you talk about, which is not so very remote, after all, than to the present. I had a little friend Madelon once, but I feel quite a stranger with this fashionable Miss Linders before me."

"You are laughing at me," said Madelon, opening her eyes wide. "I am not at all fashionable, I think. I don't know what you mean; what should make you think such a thing, Monsieur Horace?"

"Well, your general appearance," he answered. "It suggests balls, fêtes, concerts, operas—"

Madelon shook her head, laughing.

"That is a very deceptive appearance," she said. "Aunt Barbara and I never go anywhere but to classes, and masters, and to a small tea-party occasionally, and to see pictures sometimes."

"But how is that?—does Aunt Barbara not approve of society?"

"Oh, yes, but she thinks I am not old enough," answered Madelon demurely. "So I am not out yet, and I have not been to a ball since I was ten years old."

"And do you like that sort of thing? It does not sound at all lively," said Graham.

"It is rather dull," replied Madelon, simply; "but then I think everything in England is—is *triste*—I beg your par

don," she added, quickly, coloring, "I did not mean to complain."

"No, no, I understand. You need not mind what you say to me, Madelon; I want to know what you are doing, what sort of life you are leading, how you get on. So you find England *triste?* In what way?"

"I dont know—not in one way or another—it is every thing. There is no life, no movement, no color, or sunshine—yes, the sun shines, of course, but it is different. Ah, Monsieur Horace, you who have just come back to it, do you not understand what I mean?"

"I think I do in a way; but then, you know, coming to England is coming home to me, Madelon, and that makes a great difference."

"Yes, that makes a great difference; England can never be home to me, I think. I will tell you, Monsieur Horace—yesterday at that Exhibition I went to with Aunt Barbara, you know, I saw a picture; it was an Italian scene, quite small, only a white wall with a vine growing over the top, and a bit of blue sky, and a beggar-boy asleep in the shade. One has seen the same thing a hundred times before, but this one looked so bright, so hot, so sunny, it gave me such a longing—such a longing—"

She started up, and walked once or twice up and down the room. In a moment she came back, and went on hurriedly—

"You ask me if I have forgotten the past, Monsieur Horace. I think of it always—always. I cannot like England and English life. Aunt Barbara will not let me speak of it, and I try to forget it when she is by, but I cannot. Aunt Barbara is very kind—kinder than you can imagine—it is not that; but I am weary of it all so. When we walk in the Park, or sit here in the evening, reading, I am thinking of all the beautiful places there are in the world; of all the great things to be done, of all that people are seeing, and doing, and enjoying. I wish I could get away; I wish I could go anywhere—if I could run away—I have a voice, I could sing, I could make money enough to live upon. I think I should have done so, Monsieur Horace, if I had not known you were coming home. Yes, if I

could run away somewhere, where I could breathe—be free—"

"You must never do that," cried Graham hastily—he was standing opposite to her now, with his back to the fire; "you don't know what you are saying, Madelon. Promise me that you will not think of it even."

"I was talking nonsense, I don't suppose I meant it really," she answered; "I could not do it, you know; but I promise all the same, as you wish it."

"And you always keep your promises, I know," said Graham, smiling at her.

"Ah, do not," she cried, suddenly covering her face with her hands, "don't speak of that, Monsieur Horace—I know now—ah, yes, I understand what you must have thought—but I did not then; indeed I was only a child then, I did not know what I was doing."

"I don't think you are much more than a child now," said Graham, taking one of her hands in his; "you are not much altered, after all, Madelon."

"Am I not?" she said. "But I have tried to improve; I have worked very hard, I thought it would please you, and that you would be glad to find me different—and I am different," she added, with a sudden pathetic change in her voice. "I understand a great deal now that I never thought of before; I think of the old life, but it is not all with pleasure, and I know why Aunt Barbara—and yet I do love it so much, and you are a part of it, Monsieur Horace—when you speak your voice seems to bring it back; and you call me Madelon—no one else calls me Madelon—" Her voice broke down.

"You are not happy, my dear little girl," said Graham, in his old kind way, and trying to laugh off her emotion. "I shall have to prescribe for you. What shall it be?—a course of balls and theatres? What would Aunt Barbara say to that?"

"She would not employ you for a doctor again, I think," said Madelon, smiling. "No, I am not unhappy, Monsieur Horace—only dull sometimes; and Aunt Barbara would say, that is on account of my foreign education. I know she thinks all foreigners frivolous and ill-educated; I have heard her say so."

When Madelon went to her room that night, she sat long over her fire, pondering, girl-fashion, on her talk with Horace Graham. The tones of his voice were still ringing in her ears; she seemed still to see his kind look, to feel the friendly grasp of his hand; and as she thought of him, her familiar little bed-room, with its white-curtained bed, and pictured walls, and well-filled book-shelves, seemed to vanish, and she saw herself again, a desolate child, sitting at the window of the Paris hotel that hot August night her father died, weeping behind the convent grating, crouched on the damp earth in the dark avenues of the Promenade à Sept Heures. He had not changed in all these years, she thought, he had come back kind and good as ever, to be her friend and protector, as he had always been; and he had said she was not altered much either, and yet she was—ah! so altered from the unconscious, unthinking, ignorant child he had left. She began to pace up and down the room, where indeed she had spent many a wakeful night before now, thinking, reflecting, reasoning, trying to make out the clue to her old life—striving to reconcile it with the new life around her—not too successfully on the whole. How was it she had first discovered the want of harmony between them? How was it she had first learnt to appreciate the gulf that separated the experiences of her first years, from the pure, peaceful life she was leading now? She could hardly have told; no one had revealed it to her, no one had spoken of it; but in a thousand unconsidered ways—in talk, in books, in the unconscious influences of her every-day surroundings, she had come to understand the true meaning of her father's life, and to know that the memory of these early days, that she had found so bright and happy, was something never to be spoken of, to be hidden away—a disgrace to her, even, perhaps. Aunt Barbara never would let her talk of them, would have blotted them out if possible; she had wondered why at first—she understood well enough now, and resented the enforced silence. She only cherished the thought of them, and of her father the more; she only clung to her old love for him the more desperately, because it must be in secret; and she longed at times, with a sad, inexpressi-

ble yearning, for something of the old brightness that had died out one mournful night nearly eight years ago, when she had talked with her father for the last time.

"I think I must be a hundred years old," the girl would say to herself sometimes, after returning from one of those little parties of which she had spoken to Graham, where she had spent the evening in the company of a dozen other young ladies of her own age, all white muslin and sash-ribbons. "These girls, how tiresome they all are!—how they chatter and laugh, and what silly jokes they make! How can it amuse them? But they are still in the school-room, as Aunt Barbara is always telling me; and before that, they were all in the nursery, I suppose; they do not know anything about life; their only experiences concern nurses and governesses; while I—I—ah! is it possible I am no older than they are?"

She would lean her arms on the window-sill, and look out on the midnight sky; the Abbey chimes would ring out over the great city, overhead the stars would be shining perhaps, but down below, between the trees in the Park, a great glare would show where a millon lamps were keeping watch till dawn. Shall we blame our Madelon, if she sometimes looked away from the stars, and down upon the glare that brightened far up into the dark sky? All the young blood was throbbing and stirring in her veins with such energy and vigor; the world was so wide, so wide, the circle around her so narrow, and in that bright, misty past, which, after all, she only half understood, were to be found so many precedents for possibilities that might still be hidden in the future. Shall we blame her if, in her youthful belief in happiness as the chief good, her youthful impatience of peace, and calm, and rest, she longed with a great longing for movement, change, excitement? Outside, as it seemed to her, in her vague young imagination, such a free, glorious life was going on—and she had no part in it! As she stood at her window, the distant, ceaseless roar of the street traffic would sound to her, in the stillness of the night, like the beat of the great waves of life that for ever broke and receded, before they could touch the weary spot where she stood spell-bound in isolation. And through it all she said to herself,

"When Monsieur Horace comes home,"—and now Monsieur Horace had come, would he do anything to help her?

Graham, indeed, was willing enough to do what he could for her; and before he went to bed that night he wrote the following letter to his sister, Mrs. Vavasour:

"MY DEAR GEORGIE,

"The butter and eggs arrived in safety, and Aunt Barbara declared herself much pleased with your hamper of country produce; but you will, no doubt, have heard from her before this. She is looking wonderfully well, and not a day older than when I left England. As for Madeleine Linders, I hardly recognized her, she is so grown and so much improved. I find I have at least a fortnight's business in London, and then I will run down to you for another visit, if I may. Would it put you out very much if I brought Madeleine with me for a time? I should like you and her to know each other, and a change would do her good. Aunt Barbara seems to have been giving her a high-pressure education, with no fun to counterbalance it, and the poor child finds it horribly dull work; and no wonder—I know I should be sorry to go through it myself. A few weeks with you and the children would brighten her up, and do her all the good in the world. Let me know what you think of it.

"Ever yours,

"HORACE GRAHAM."

CHAPTER III.

At Ashurst.

It was two days after Graham's talk with Madelon, that some people of whom mention has once or twice been made in this little history, were sitting chatting together as they drank their afternoon tea in Mrs. Vavasour's drawing-room at Ashurst, a low, dark-panelled, chintz-furnished room, with an ever-pervading scent of dried rose-leaves, and fresh flowers, and with long windows opening on to the little lawn, all shut in with trees and shrubberies. Mrs. Vavasour, who sat by the fire knitting, was a calm, silent, gentle-looking woman, with smooth, fair hair under her lace cap, and those pathetic lines we sometimes see in the faces of those who through circumstances, or natural temperament, have achieved contentment through the disappointments of life, rather than through its fulfilled hopes. She was the mother of many children, of whom the elder half was already dispersed—one was married, one dead, one in India, and one at sea; of those still at home, the eldest, Madge, an honest, sturdy square-faced child of eleven or twelve, was in the room now, handing about tea-cups and bread-and-butter. Dr. Vavasour was a big, white-haired man, many years older than his wife, who had married him when she was only seventeen; he was a clever man, and a popular doctor, and having just come in from a twenty miles' drive through March winds and rains, was standing with his back to the mantel-piece, with an air of having thoroughly earned warmth and repose. He was discussing parish matters with Mr. Morris, the curate, who was sitting at the small round table where Maria Leslie, a tall, rosy, good-humored-looking young woman of five or six-and-twenty, was pouring out the tea.

"If the Rector is on your side, Morris," said the Doctor, "of course I can say nothing; only I can tell you this, you will lose me. I will have nothing to do with your new-fangled notions; I have said my prayers after the same fashion for the last sixty years, and as sure as you begin to sing-song them, instead of reading them, I give up my pew, and go off to church at C——, with my wife and family."

"Not with Miss Leslie, I trust, Doctor," said the Curate; "we could not get on without Miss Leslie, to lead the singing."

"Miss Leslie does as she likes, and if she profers sham singing to honest reading, that's her concern, not mine. But I tell you plainly, sir, I'm an old-fashioned man, and have no patience with all these changes. I have a great mind to see if I can't get made churchwarden, and try the effect of a little counter-irritation. Madge, my child, bring me a cup of tea."

"I hope *you* do not hold these opinions, Miss Leslie," said the Curate, in an under tone to Marie Leslie; "we could not afford to lose you from among us; you must not desert us."

"Oh, no, I could not give up my Ashurst Sundays," answers Maria, fidgeting among her cups and saucers; "I have too many interests here, the schools, and the church—and the preaching—not that the Rector's sermons are always very lively; and then I like chanting and intoning."

"And can you not convert the Doctor?"

"I think that would be impossible; Dr. Vavasour always held to his own opinions. Will you have some more tea?"

"No more, thank you. I should have thought, Miss Leslie, you might have converted any one; I cannot fancy any arguments you might use being other than irresistible."

"Mr. Morris," said Mrs. Vavasour, breaking in upon this little tête-à-tête, "have you seen those curious spiders that my brother brought home from South America? You might fetch Uncle Horace's case, Madge, and show them to Mr. Morris; they are worth looking at, I assure you."

An hour later this little party had dispersed. Mr. Morris had taken leave, Maria had gone to dress for dinner

Madge to her school-room; Dr. Vavasour and his wife were left alone.

"I had a letter from Horace this afternoon," she said taking it out of her pocket, and giving it to the Doctor to read. "What do you say to our having Miss Linders here for a time? I have often thought of asking her, and this will be a good opportunity. Do you object?"

"Not in the least, my dear; she is some sort of a cousin of yours; is she not?"

"A remote one," said Mrs. Vavasour, smiling. "However, I am very willing to make her acquaintance, especially if the poor girl wants a change. I agree with Horace, that a too prolonged course of Aunt Barbara must be trying."

"Why, I thought Mrs. Treherne was everything that was perfect and admirable; she has never troubled us much with her society, but I am sure I understood from you—"

"So she is," said his wife, interrupting him; "that is just it—Aunt Barbara is quite perfect, a kind of ideal gentlewoman in cultivation, and refinement, and piety, and everything else; but she is, without exception, the most alarming person I know."

"Well, let Miss Linders come by all means," repeated the Doctor. "Isn't it nearly dinner-time? I am starving, I have been twenty miles round the country to-day, and when I come in I find that long-legged fellow Morris philandering away, and have to listen to his vacuous nonsense for an hour. Whatever brings him here so often? He ought to have something better to do with his time than to be idling it away over afternoon tea. Is he looking after Madge?"

"Poor little Madge!" answered Mrs. Vavasour, laughing. "No, I wish I could think Mr. Morris had nothing more serious on hand: but it is much more likely to be Maria."

"Maria!" cried the Doctor; "is that what the man is up to? But surely he knows she is engaged to Horace."

"Indeed I much doubt it," Mrs. Vavasour answered; "the engagement was to be a secret, and I am not aware that any one knows of it but ourselves, and Aunt Barbara—and Miss Linders probably—and if Maria will not enlighten Mr. Morris as to how matters stand, I do not see what any one else can do."

"Then Molly is very much to blame; and I have a great mind to tell her so."

"I think you had better let things take their own course," said Mrs. Vavasour. "Maria is quite old enough to know what she is about, and Horace will be down here in a few days to look after his own interests."

"Well, but—bless my soul!" cried the Doctor, "I can't make it out at all. Do you mean that Maria is allowing this fellow Morris' attention? I thought she and Graham were devoted to each other, and had been for the last five years?"

"I think they thought they were five years ago, when Horace, fresh home from the Crimea, was all the heroes in the world in Molly's eyes; and he was just in the mood to fall in love with the first pretty bright girl he saw. But all that was over long ago, and in these five years they have grown utterly apart."

"Then the sooner they grow together again the better,' said the Doctor.

"I don't believe it is possible," answered his wife. "I don't see how they can ever pull together; they have different tastes, different aims, different ideas on every conceivable subject, I am very fond of Molly; she is an excellent, good girl in her way, but it is not the way that will fit her to become Horace's wife. She will weary him, and he will—not neglect her, he will never be unkind to a woman—but he will not be the husband she deserves to have. For my part, I think it will be a thousand pities if a mistaken sense of honor makes them hold to their engagement."

"That may be all very well for Horace," said the Doctor; "but what about Molly? When a girl has been looking forward to marrying and having a house of her own, it is not so pleasant for her to have all her prospects destroyed."

"Then she can marry Mr. Morris, if she pleases."

"Indeed! Well, if Maria's mistaken sense of honor does not stand in the way of a flirtation with Morris, I shall be much astonished if Horace's does not make itself felt one way or another. However, it is no concern of mine; manage it your own way."

"Indeed I have no intention of interfering," said Mrs. Vavasour. "I can imagine nothing more useless, especially as Horace will be here in less than a fortnight. But I will write to-night to Aunt Barbara about Miss Linders."

"Oh, yes, ask Miss Linders down here, by all means: and if Morris would only fall in love with her, that might settle all difficulties; but I suppose there is not much chance of that." And so saying, the Doctor went to dress for dinner.

It was a new world, this, in which our Madelon found herself, after the still leisure of her home in Cornwall, with its outlook on rocks, and sea, and sky, after the unbroken regularity of her London life, with its ever-recurring round of fixed employments—a new world, this sheltered English village, lying among woods, and fields, and pastures, divided by trim brown hedges, whose every twig was studded with red March buds, and beneath which late March primroses were blowing—and a new world, too, the varied life of this bright, cheerful house, where people were for ever coming and going, and where children's footsteps were pattering, and children's voices and laughter ringing, all day long.

It was with the children especially that Madelon made friends in the early days of her visit. From Mrs. Vavasour she had the kindliest welcome; but the mistress of this busy household had a thousand things to attend to, that left her but little time to bestow on her guest. She had deputed Maria Leslie to entertain Madelon; but Maria also had her own business—school-teaching, cottage-visiting in the village; nor, in truth, even when the two were in each other's society, did they find much to say to each other. It had never been a secret to Madelon that Graham was engaged to Maria Leslie, and the girl had looked forward, perhaps, to making friends with the woman who was accounted worthy of the honor of being Monsieur Horace's wife; but the very first day she had turned away disappointed. There was, both instinctively felt, no common ground on which they could meet and speak a common language intelligible to both; memories, interests, tastes, all lay too wide apart; and as for those larger human sympathies which, wider and deeper than language can express, make themselves felt and under-

stood without its medium, something forbade their touching upon them at all. There was, from the first, a certain coolness and absence of friendliness in Maria's manner, which was quite at variance with her usual good-humored amiability, and which Madelon felt, but did not understand. She could not guess that it was the expression of a vague jealousy in Maria's mind, excited by Madelon's beauty and graciousness of air and manner, and by a knowledge of her past relations with Horace Graham; Maria would hardly have acknowledged it to herself, but it raised an impassable barrier between these two.

As for Graham, no one saw much of him. He was shut up all day in his brother-in-law's study, writing, copying notes, sorting and arranging specimens, preparing the book that was to come out in the course of the next season; and, when he did appear, at breakfast or dinner, he was apt to be silent and moody, rarely exchanging more than a few words with any one. Madelon wondered sometimes at this taciturn Monsieur Horace, so different from the one she had always known; though, indeed, in speaking to her the old kindly light would always come back to his eyes, the old friendly tones to his voice. But, like every one else, she saw but little of him; and, in fact, Graham in these days, a grim, melancholy, silent man, brooding over his own thoughts, his own hopes, plans, disappointments perhaps, was no very lively addition to a family party.

There was one small person, however, whom our Madelon at once inspired with a quite unbounded admiration for her. A few evenings after her arrival, some one knocked at her bed-room door as she was dressing for dinner; she opened it, and there stood Madge in the passage, her hands full of red and white daisies.

"I have brought you some flowers, Cousin Madelon," said the child shyly.

"They are beautiful," said Madelon, taking them from her; "won't you come in? I will put some of them in my hair."

She sat down before the looking-glass, and began arranging them in her hair, while Madge stood and watched her with wide-open eyes.

"They are out of my own garden," she said presently.

"I might have guessed that, they are so pretty," said Madelon, turning round and smiling at her; it was in the girl's nature to make these little gracious speeches, which came to her more readily than ordinary words of thanks. "I like them very much," she went on; "they remind me of some that grew in the convent garden."

"Were you ever in a convent?" asked Madge, with a certain awe.

"Yes, for two years, when I was about as old as you are."

"And were there any nuns there?" asked Madge, whose ideas were not enlarged, and who looked upon a nun as the embodiment of much romance.

"To be sure," answered Madelon, rather amused; "they were all nuns, except some little girls who came every day to be taught by them."

"Then you were at school there?" said Madge.

"Not exactly; my aunt was the—what do you call it?—Lady Superior of the convent; that was why I went there."

"And did you like it?" inquired Madge, who was apparently of opinion that such an opportunity for gaining exceptional information should not be wasted.

"I don't know," answered Madelon; "I don't think I did at the time; I used to find it very dull, and I often longed to be away. But the nuns were very kind to me; and it is pleasant to look back upon, so quiet and peaceful. I think we don't always know when and where we are happy," she added, with a little sigh.

She sat leaning against the table, her head resting on her hand, thinking over the past—as she was for ever thinking of the past now, poor child! How sad, how weary, they had been, those years in the convent—yes, she knew that she had found them so—and yet how peaceful, how innocent, how sheltered! Reading her past life in the new light that every day made its shadows darker, she knew that those years were the only ones of her childhood which she could look back upon, without the sudden pang that would come with the memory of those others which she had found so happy then, but which she knew now were—what? Ah,

something so different from what she had once imagined! But as for those days at the convent, they came back to her, softened by the kindly haze of time, with the strangest sense of restfulness and security, utterly at variance, one would say, with the restless longing with which she looked out on the world of action—and yet not wholly inconsistent with it perhaps, after all. Did she indeed know when and where she would be happy?

Madge, meanwhile, stood and looked at her. She had fairly fallen in love with this new cousin of hers; her beauty, and gracious ways, her foreign accent, and now her experiences of nuns and convents had come like a revelation to the little English girl in her downright, every-day life. With a comical incongruity, she could compare her in her own mind to nothing but an enchanted princess in some fairy tale; and she stood gazing first at her and then at the glass, where soft wavy brown hair and red and white daisies were reflected.

"What are you thinking of?" said Madelon, looking up suddenly.

"I—I don't know," replied Madge, quite taken aback, coloring and stammering; and then, as if she could not help it—"Oh! Cousin Madelon, you are so pretty."

"It is very pretty of you to say so," said Madelon, laughing and blushing too a little; then holding out both hands she drew Madge towards her, and kissed her on her two cheeks. "I think you and I will be great friends; will we not?" she said.

"Yes," says unresponsive Madge shortly, looking down and twisting her fingers in her awkward English fashion.

"I would like you to be fond of me," continued Madelon, "for I think I shall love you very much; and I like you to call me Madelon—nobody else calls me so—except —except your Uncle Horace."

"It was Uncle Horace told me to," cried Madge. "I asked him what I should call you, and he said he thought Cousin Madelon would do."

"I think it will do very well," said Madelon, rising. "To-morrow will you take me to your garden? I should like to see your daisies growing."

After this Madge and Madelon became great friends and when the former was at her lessons, there was a nursery-full of younger children to pet and play with, if Madelon felt so disposed. Sometimes in the morning, when she was sitting alone in the drawing-room, little feet would go scampering along the floor upstairs, shrill little voices would make themselves heard from above, and then Madelon, throwing down book or work, would run up to the big nursery, where, while the two elder children were in the school-room with their mother, three round rosy children kept up a perpetual uproar. It was quite a new sensation to our lonely Madelon to have these small things to caress, and romp with, and fondle, and she felt that it was a moment of triumph when they had learnt to greet her entrance with a shout of joy. Down on the floor she would go, and be surrounded in a moment with petitions for a game, a story, a ride.

Graham came up one day in the midst of a most uproarious romp. "Nurse," he said, putting his head in at the door, "I do wish you would keep these children quiet—" and stopped as suddenly as the noise had stopped at his appearance. Madelon, all blushing and confused, was standing with the youngest boy riding on her back, while the little girls, Lina and Kate, were holding on to her skirts behind; they had pulled down all her hair, and it was hanging in loose waves over her shoulders.

"I beg your pardon, Madelon," said Graham, coming in, and smiling at her confusion. "I had no idea that you were here, and the instigator of all this uproar; where is nurse? I shall have to ask her to keep you all in order together."

"Nurse has gone downstairs to do some ironing," says Lina. "Oh, Uncle Horace, we were having such fun with Cousin Madelon."

"Uncle Horace, will you give me a ride? You give better rides than Cousin Madelon," cries Jack, slipping down on to the ground.

"Uncle Horace, Cousin Madelon has been telling us about South America, and we have been hunting buffaloes."

"I am sorry," says Madelon; "I quite forgot how busy

you are, Monsieur Horace, and that you could hear all our noise. We will be quieter for the future, and not hunt buffaloes just over your head."

He looked at her without answering; there was a flush on her pale cheeks under the shadow of the heavy waves of hair, a smile in her eyes as she looked at him with one of her old, shy, childish glances, as if not quite sure how he would take her apology. He could not help smiling in answer, then laughed outright, and turned away abruptly.

"Come here, then, Jack, and I will give you a ride," he said, lifting the boy on to his shoulder. "This is the way we hunt buffaloes."

Half an hour later, Maria, just come in from the village, looked into the nursery, attracted by the shouts and laughter. "It is really very odd," she said afterwards to Mrs. Vavasour, in a somewhat aggrieved tone, "that when Horace always declares he cannot find time to walk with me, or even to talk to me, he should spend half his morning romping with the children in the nursery." And Mrs. Vavasour, who had also gone upstairs with Madge and Harry when they had finished their lessons, had not much to say in answer.

CHAPTER IV.

Ich kann nicht hin!

ONE day, Madelon said to Mrs. Vavasour, "Please let me have all the children for a walk this afternoon."

"What, all! my dear girl," said Mrs. Vavasour; "you don't know what you are undertaking."

"Oh, yes, I do," Madelon answered, smiling; "they will be very good, I know, and Madge will help me."

So they all set out for their walk, through the garden, and out at the gate that led at once into the fields which stretched beyond. They walked one by one along the narrow track between the springing corn, a little flock of brown-holland children, and Madelon last of all, in her fresh gray spring dress. Harry had a drum and marched on in front, drubbing with all his might; and Jack followed, brandishing a sword and blowing a tin trumpet. Madge would have stopped this horrible din, which indeed scared away the birds to right and left, but Madelon only laughed and said she liked it.

Graham, coming across the fields in another direction, saw the little procession advancing towards him, and waited on the other side of a stile till it should come up. The children tumbled joyfully over into Uncle Horace's arms, and were at once ready with a hundred plans for profiting by the unwonted pleasure of having him for a companion in their walk; but he distinctly declined all their propositions, and sending them on in front with Madge, walked along at Madelon's side.

"Why do you plague yourself with all these children," he said, "instead of taking a peaceable walk in peaceable society?"

"I like the children," she answered, "and I should have found no society but my own this afternoon, for Mrs. Vavasour was going to pay visits, she said, and Maria went out directly after lunch."

"And you think your own society would have been less peaceable than that of these noisy little ruffians?"

"I don't know," she answered; "I like walking by myself very much sometimes, but I like the children, too, and Madge and I are great friends."

"I think Madge shows her sense—she and I are great friends, too," said Graham, laughing.

"Madge thinks there is no one in the world like Uncle Horace—she is always talking about you," said Madelon, shyly.

"That is strange—to me she is always talking about you—she looks upon you as a sort of fairy princess, I believe, who has lived in a charmed world as strange to her as any she reads about in story-books. Madge's experiences are limited, and it does not take much to set her little brain working. If Maria and I are abroad next winter, I think I must get Georgie to spare her to me for a time."

"Are you going abroad again?" said Madelon; and as she asked the question, a chill shadow seemed to fall upon the bright spring landscape.

"It is possible—I have heard of an opening."

He paused for a moment, and then went on—

"I don't know why I should not tell you all about it, Madelon, though I have said nothing about it to any one yet—but it will be no secret. I had a letter this morning telling me that there is an opening for a physcian at L——, that small place on the Mediterranean, you know, that has come so much into fashion lately as a winter place for invalids. Dr. B——, an old friend of mine, who is there now, is going to leave it, and he has written to give me the first offer of being his successor."

"And shall you go?" asked Madelon.

"Well I should like it well enough for a good many reasons, for the next two or three years, at any rate. It is a lovely place, a good climate, and I should not feel myself tied down if anything else turned up that suited me better;

but there are other considerations—in fact, I cannot decide without thinking it well over."

"But at any rate, you would not go there till next winter, would you?" said Madelon, with a tremor in her voice which she vainly tried to conceal.

"Not to stop; but if I accept this offer, I should go out immediately for a week or two, so as to get introduced to B——'s patients before they leave. A good many will be returning next winter probably, and it would be as well for me, as a matter of business, to make their acquaintance; you understand?"

"Yes, I understand—but then you would have to go at once, Monsieur Horace for it is already April, and the weather is so warm that people will be coming away. I remember how they used to fly from Nice and Florence—every one that we knew as soon as it began to get hot."

"Yes, I have not much time to lose, and if I decide to go at all, I shall start at once. But it is very doubtful."

They had reached the end of the field while talking; a heavy gate separated it from a lane beyond, and the children, unable to open it, had dispersed here and there along the bank hunting for primroses.

"Shall we go on?" said Graham, "or would you like to turn back now? You look tired."

Madelon did not answer; what was the use of going on? What did it matter? Everything came to the same end at last—a sense of utter discouragement and weariness had seized her, and she stood leaning against the gate, staring blankly down the road before her. There were about twenty yards of shady, grassy lane, and then it was divided by a cross-road, with a cottage standing at one of the angles. Graham who was looking at Madelon, saw her face change suddenly.

"Why, there are—" she began, and then stopped abruptly, coloring with confusion.

Graham looked; two figures had just appeared from one of the cross-roads, and walking slowly forward, had paused in front of the cottage; they were Mr. Morris, the curate, and Marie Leslie. The clergyman stood with his back to Graham and Madelon, but they could see Maria with her handker-

chief to her eyes, apparently weeping bitterly. The curate was holding one of her hands in both his, and so they stood together for a moment, till he raised it to his lips. Then she pulled it away vehemently, and burying her face completely in her handkerchief, hurried off in a direction opposite to that by which she had come. Mr. Morris stood gazing after her for a moment, and then he also disappeared within the cottage.

This little scene passed so rapidly, that the two looking on had hardly time to realize that they were looking on, before it was all over. There was a sort of pause. Madelon gave one glance at Graham, and turned away—then the children came running up with their primroses. "Here are some for you, Uncle Horace; Cousin Madelon, please may I put some in your hat?"

Madelon took off her hat, and stooped down to help Madge arrange the flowers; she would not try to understand the meaning of what they had just witnessed, nor to interpret Monsieur Horace's look.

"You are going home," said Graham, unfastening the gate without looking at her; "then we part company here; I have to go further." And without another word he strode off, leaving the children disconcerted and rebellious at this abrupt termination of their walk.

"Madge," said Madelon, caressing the little square perplexed face, "you won't mind having a short walk to-day, will you? Let us go home now, and we will play in the garden till your tea-time;" and wise little Madge agreed without further demur.

It was on the evening of the same day that Madelon, coming in from the garden where she had been wandering alone in the twilight, found Horace discussing his plans with Mrs. Vavasour, who was making tea. She would have gone away again, but Graham called her back, and went on talking to his sister.

"I must send an answer as soon as possible," he was saying; "I can't keep B—— waiting for a month while I am making up my mind; I will speak to Maria this evening."

"It would be as well," answered Mrs. Vavasour; "she

ought to be told at once. But must an answer be sent immediately? I think you will see that it will be useless to hurry Maria for a decision; she will want time for consideration."

"She shall have any reasonable time," he replied shortly; but that is why I shall speak at once—she can think it over."

"And if you have in a measure made up your own mind," continued his sister, "she will be better pleased, I am sure; she will wish in some sort to be guided by your wishes."

"That is just what I am anxious to avoid," he answered impatiently. "I do not desire to influence her in any way; I would not for the world that she should make any sacrifice on my account, and then be miserable for ever after."

"My dear Horace, you do not suppose Maria—"

"My dear Georgie, I know what Maria is, and you must allow me to take my own way."

He began to stride up and down the room with his hands in his pockets, Madelon watching him in silence. Presently he began again—

"I know what Molly is; if she imagined that I wanted to go to this place, she would say 'Go,' without thinking of herself for a moment; but ten to one, when we got there, she would be for ever regretting England, and hating the society, and the mode of life, and everything, and everybody; and it would be very natural—she has never been abroad, and knows nothing of foreign life and manners."

"Then you do not mean to go?" said Mrs. Vavasour.

"I have not said so," he answered—"I shall put the matter calmly before Maria; tell her what I think are the reasons for and against, and leave her to decide. I suppose she cannot complain of that."

"I do not imagine for a moment she will complain," replied Mrs. Vavasour; "but I think she will want your judgment to help her."

He only muttered something in answer to this; and Madelon asked in a low voice, "Is it about going abroad that Monsieur Horace is doubting?"

"Yes, he told you about it, did he not?" said Mrs.

Vavasour. "I hope he may decide to go—it would be the very thing for him."

"Do you think so?" said Graham, who had overheard this last remark; and turning to Madelon with rather a melancholy smile, "Listen to the description, Madelon, and tell me what you think of it—a little town on the shores of the Mediterranean, sheltered on every side by hills, so that all the winter is spring, and flowers bloom all the year round. The gardens are full of pomegranate and orange trees, and the hills are terraced with vineyards, and covered with olives and chestnuts everywhere else. Do you think that that sounds inviting?"

"A great deal too good to be true," said Mrs. Vavasour, laughing. "I never believe thoroughly in these earthly paradises." But Madelon did not laugh; her eyes lighted up, her cheeks glowed.

"Ah?" she cried, "I can imagine all that. I believe in such places; they exist somewhere in the world, but one cannot get to them."

"One can sometimes," said Graham; "for perhaps Maria and I are going to this one, and then you had better become an invalid as fast as possible, Madelon, that Aunt Barbara may bring you there too."

"And you are really going?" she asked, with a sad sick feeling at her heart.

"Perhaps," he said, "we shall see what Maria says. I am afraid she may not take the same view of it all that you do;" and Maria coming in at that moment, the conversation dropped.

After tea they were all sitting, as usual, in the drawing-room; a wood fire burnt and crackled on the low hearth, but the evening was warm, and the long windows were open to the lawn, where Graham was walking up and down, smoking a pipe. Dr. Vavasour was dozing in an arm-chair, Mrs. Vavasour sat at the table stitching, Maria in the shade knitting cotton socks, and Madelon was leaning back in her chair, the lamplight falling on her brown hair and white dress, a piece of embroidery between her fingers, but her hands lying in her lap, and such sad thoughts in her poor little weary head. So this was the end of it all? Monsieur

Horace was going to be married, and then live abroad—yes, she was certain he would live abroad—who would stay in England if they could help it?—and she would never, never see him again! The one thought revolved in her brain with a sort of dull weariness, which prevented her seizing more than half its meaning, but which only required a touch to startle it into acutest pain. No one spoke or moved, and this oppressive silence of a room full of people seemed to perplex her as with a sense of unreality, and was more distracting for the moment than would have been the confusion of a dozen tongues around her.

Presently, however, Graham came in from the garden, and walked straight up to her.

"Will you not sing something?" he said.

She rose at once without speaking or raising her eyes, and went to the piano.

"What shall I sing?" she said, turning over her music.

"Anything—it does not matter," said Graham, who had followed her; "never mind your music—sing the first thing that comes into your head."

She considered for a moment, and then began.

When Madelon sang, her hearers could not choose but listen; in other matters she had very sufficient abilities, but in singing she rose to genius. Gifted by nature with a superb voice, an exceptional musical talent, these had been carefully cultivated during the last two or three years, and the result was an art that was no art, a noble and simple style, which gave an added intensity to her natural powers of expression, and forbade every suspicion of affectation. As she sang now, the Doctor roused up from his doze, and Mrs. Vavasour dropped her work; only Maria Leslie, sitting in the shadow of the window-curtain, knitted on with increased assiduity.

It was a German song, Schumann's "Sehnsucht," that she was singing; it was the first that had come to her mind at Graham's bidding, and, still preoccupied, she began it almost without thought of the words and sentiment; but she had not sung two lines, when some hidden emotion made itself felt in her face with a quite irresistible enthusiasm and pathos. These were the words:

"Ich blick' in mein Herz, und ich blick' in die Welt,
Bis vom schwimmenden Auge die Thräne mir fällt:
Wohl leuchtet die Ferne mit goldenem Licht,
Doch hält mich der Nord, ich erreiche sie nicht.
O die Schranken so eng, und die Welt so weit!
Und so flüchtig die Zeit, und so flüchtig die Zeit.

Ich weiss ein Land, wo aus sonnigem Grün
Um versunkene Tempel die Trauben blühn,
Wo die purpurne Woge das Ufer besäumt,
Und von kommenden Sängern der Lorbeer träumt;
Fern lockt es und winkt dem verlangenden Sinn,
Und ich kann nicht hin—kann nicht hin!"

As Madelon sang these last words she looked up, and her eyes met Graham's, as he stood leaning against the piano, gazing at her face. She blushed scarlet, and stopped suddenly.

"I—I don't think I can sing any more," she said, letting her hands fall from the keys into her lap. She turned round, and saw Maria looking at her also, watching her and Graham perhaps. "How hot it is!" she cried, pushing the hair off her forehead with a little impatient gesture. "*Je m'étouffe ici!*" And she jumped up quickly and ran out of the room.

Out of the atmosphere of love, and suspicion, and jealousy that was stifling her, into the hall, up the shallow staircase to the long matted passage which ran the length of the house, the bed-rooms opening on to it on either side. Madelon paced it rapidly for some minutes, then opened a door at the end, and entered the nursery. Nothing stifling here; a large, cool, airy room, with white blinds drawn down, subduing the full moonlight to a soft gloom, in which one could discern two little beds, each with its small occupant, whose regular breathing told that they had done, for ever, with the cares and sorrows of at least that day.

Madelon stood looking at them, the excitement that had made her cheeks burn, and her pulses throb, subsiding gradually in presence of this subdued, unconscious life. She smoothed the sheets and counterpane of one little sleeper, who, with bare limbs tossed about, was lying right across the bed, all the careful tuckings-up wofully disar-

ranged ; and then, passing on, went into an inner room that opened out of the larger nursery. The window was open here to the cool, gray sky, the moonlight shining in on the white curtains the little white bed at the further end.

"Is that you, Cousin Madelon?" says Madge, raising a brown, shaggy head as Madelon softly opened the door. "Won't you come in, please? I am not asleep."

Madelon came in and went to the window. It looked down upon the lawn, with the still tree-shadows lying across it, and some other shadows that were not still—those of two people walking up and down, talking earnestly. She could distinguish Monsieur Horace's voice, and then Maria's in answer, and then Monsieur Horace again, and a sudden pang seemed to seize the poor child's heart, and hold it tight in its grasp. How happy they were, those two, talking together down there, while she was all alone up here, looking on!

"Do come here, Cousin Madelon," said Madge's impatient voice from the bed. "I want you to tuck me up, and give me a kiss."

Madelon went up to the bed, and kneeling down by it, laid her cheek wearily by Madge's on the pillow. The child passed her arm round her neck, and hugged her tight, and the innocent, loving caress soothed the girl's sore heart, for the moment, more than anything else could have done.

"Little Madge," she said, drawing the child closer to her, as if the pressure of the little, soft, warm limbs had power to stop the aching at her heart. "Oh! Madge, I wish I were no bigger and no older than you. One is happier so."

"Do you?" said Madge, wondering. "I should like to be grown up, as tall and beautiful as you are, and to sing like you. You were singing just now downstairs ; I opened the window, and could hear you quite plainly. Why did you stop so soon?"

"It was hot," said Madelon, her face flushing up again at the recollection ; "and one is not always in the mood for singing, you know, Madge."

"Ah, but do sing me just one song, now, Cousin Madelon—just here, before I go to sleep."

Still kneeling, with Madge's head nestling on her shoulder, Madelon began to sing a litttle half-gay, half-melancholy French romance of many verses. The tune seemed to grow more and more plaintive as it went on, a pathetic, monotonous chant, rising and falling. Before it was ended, Madge's hold had relaxed, her eyes were closed—she was sound asleep for the night. Madelon rose gently, kissed the honest, rosy, freckled face; and then, as if drawn by some invincible attraction, went back to the window.

Yes, they were still there, those two, not walking up and down now, but standing under the big tree at the end of the lawn still talking, as she could see by their gestures. "Ah, how happy they are!" thinks our Madelon again, forgetting the scene of the afternoon, her doubts, her half-formed suspicions—how happy they must be, Monsieur Horace, who loves Maria, Maria who is loved by Monsieur Horace, while she—why, it is she who loves Monsieur Horace, who has loved him since he rescued her, a little child, from loneliness and despair—she, who for all these years has had but one thought, Monsieur Horace, one object, Monsieur Horace, and who sees herself now shut out from such a bright, gleaming paradise, into such shivering outer darkness. Ah, she loved him—she loved him—she owned it to herself now, with a sudden burst of passion—and he was going away he had no thought of her; his path in life lay along one road, and hers along another—a road, how blank, how dreary, wrapped in what gray, unswerving mists.

"Ah, why must I live? Oh! that I could die—if I could only die!" cries the poor child passionately in her thoughts, stretching out her hands in her young impatience of life and suffering. "I love him—is it wrong? How can I help it? I loved him before I knew what it meant, I never knew till—"

She stopped suddenly, with a blush that seemed to set her cheeks all a-flame—she had never known till half-an-hour ago, when she had looked up and met his eyes for that one moment. Ah! why had he looked at her so? And she—oh, merciful heavens! had she betrayed herself? At the very thought Madelon started as if she had been stung. She turned from the window, she covered her face with her

hands, and escaping swiftly, she fled to her own room, and throwing herself on the bed, buried her face in the pillow, to wrestle through her poor little tragedy of love, and self-consciousness, and despair.

And while Madelon is crying her heart out upstairs, this is what has been going on below. There had been an uncomfortable pause in the sitting-room after her swift retreat; Mrs. Vavasour neither moved nor spoke, Maria knitted diligently, and Graham stood gloomily staring down on the music-stool where Madelon had sat and sung, and looked up at him with that sudden gleam in her eyes, till, rousing himself, he walked through the open window, into the garden, across the lawn, to the shrubbery. He stood leaning over the little gate at the end of the path, looking over the broad moonlit field, where the scattered bushes cast strange fantastic shadows, and for the first time he admitted to himself that he had made a great, a terrible mistake in life, and he hated himself for the admission. What indeed were faith, and loyalty, and honor worth, if they could not keep him true to the girl whose love he had won five years ago, and to whom he was a thousand times pledged by every loving promise, every word of affection that had once passed between them? And yet, was this Maria to whom he had come back, this Maria so cold and indifferent, so alien from him in tastes, ideas, sympathies, was she indeed the very woman who had once won his heart, whom he had chosen as his life-long companion? How had it all been? He looked back into the past, to the first days after his return from the Crimea, when, wounded and helpless, worn out with toil and fever, he had come back to be tended by Englishwomen in an English home. A vision rose before him of a blooming girl with blue ribbons that matched blue eyes, who came and went about him softly through the long spring and summer days, arranging his cushions, fetching his books, and reading to him by the hour in gentle, unvarying tones. Yes, he understood well enough how it had all come to pass; but those days had gone by, and the Maria who had brightened them, was not she gone also? or rather, had she ever existed except in the eyes that had invested the kind girl-nurse with every perfection? And now what remained? Graham

groaned as he bowed his head upon his crossed arms, and suddenly another vision flitted before him—a pale face, a slender form, a pair of brown eyes that seemed to grow out of the twilight, and look at him with a child's affection, a woman's passion—Graham was no boy, to be tossed about on the tempestuous waves of a first love: he had long held that there were things in life, to which love and courtship, marrying and giving in marriage, might be looked upon as quite subordinate—and yet he felt, at that moment, as if life itself would be a cheap exchange for one touch of the small hand that had clung so confidingly to his, years ago, for one more look into the eyes that had met his, scarcely ten minutes since.

Such a mood could not long endure in a man of Graham's stamp and habit of mind; and in a moment he had roused himself, and begun to walk slowly back towards the house. What he might feel could have no practical bearing on the matter one way or another, and feeling might therefore as well be put out of sight. He was bound to Maria by every tie of honor, and he was no man to break those ties—if she were disposed to hold by them. But was she indeed? Graham had not been blind to what had been going on round him during the last few weeks, and he felt that some explanation with Maria was due. Well, there should be an explanation, and if he found that she was still willing to hold to their engagement—why, then they would be married.

He went up to Maria, sitting at the window.

"It *is* very warm indoors," he said; "suppose you come and take a turn in the garden."

"As you like," she answered; "I don't find it particularly warm;" but she laid down her work at once, and joined him in the garden.

They took two or three turns up and down the lawn in silence, till at last Graham, trying to speak cheerfully, said, "I had a letter this morning, Maria, that I want to consult you about, as it concerns you as well as me."

"Does it?" she said indifferently. "Well?"

"There is an opening for a physician at that winter place for invalids on the Mediterranean," said Graham, explaining, "and I have the offer of it; it would suit me very well, for

the next year or two at any rate, and would enable us to marry at once; but my doubt, Maria, is, whether you would not object to leaving England."

"I don't see what that has to do with it," answered Maria, shortly and coldly. "Of course you will do what you think best."

"What I might think best in the abstract, Maria, is not the point; what I want to ascertain are your wishes in the matter."

"I should have thought you might have known already," she replied; "you are very well aware that, for years, it has been my wish that you should have this partnership with Dr. Vavasour."

"I am aware of it," he said, and paused. "Listen to me, Maria," he continued in a moment, "let me put the case fairly before you. If I accept Dr. Vavasour's offer, it closes, so to speak, my career. I shall be bound down to this country practice for life probably, for years at any rate, since, after making the arrangement, I could not feel justified in altering it again during Dr. Vavasour's lifetime. If, on the other hand, I go to L——, I shall be bound to no one, and free to take anything else that might suit me better."

"Go, then!" cried Maria, hastily, "I will not stand in your way. I should have thought, Horace, that after all these years you would have been glad to look forward to a quiet home and a settled life; but I see it is different, so go to L——, and never mind me. If it becomes a question between me and your career, I should think your choice would not be a difficult one."

Her voice began to tremble, but she went on vehemently: "Why do you ask my opinion at all? It can make no difference to you; you have gone your own way these five years past without much regard for my wishes one way or another; and since your return home you have hardly spoken to me, much less consulted me—"

It was at that moment that Madelon, kneeling at Madge's bedside, began to sing, and at the sound of her voice ringing through the open window of her little upper room, Graham involuntarily stopped, and lost the thread of Maria's speech. She perceived it at once.

"Ah! yes, that is it," she cried passionately, hardly knowing what she said. "Do you think I do not see, that I cannot understand? Do I not know who it is you care to listen to now, to talk to, to consult? Ask her what she thinks, ask Madeleine's advice—"

"Be silent!" cried Horace, with sudden anger, "I will not have Madeleine's name mentioned between us in that way. Forgive me, Maria," he went on more calmly, "but this sort of talk is useless; though, if I cared to recriminate, I might perhaps ask you, how it happens that Mr. Morris comes here so frequently."

"Mr. Morris!" faltered Maria; "who told you —"

Her momentary indignation melted into tears and sobs; she turned, and put out her hand to Graham, as they stood together under the big plane-tree.

"Oh, Horace," she said, "I am very unhappy, and if you blame me, I cannot help it—I daresay I deserve it."

"My poor Molly," he answered, taking her hand in his. "Why should I blame you? and why are you unhappy? Let me help you—unless, indeed, I am altogether the cause of it all."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Vavasour, left all alone in the sitting-room, stitched away in the lamplight, looking out from time to time into the dewy garden, where the two figures were pacing up and down. The murmur of their voices reached her, and presently she also heard Madelon singing up above, and then the two went away out of hearing, and she could distinguish nothing in the silence but the rustling of her own work and the soft, inarticulate sounds of the early night. She could guess pretty well what the result of that talk would be. That very afternoon, going into Maria's room on her return home, she had found the girl in an agony of weeping, and had learnt from her that Mr. Morris had just made her an offer, and that she had been obliged to tell him that she was already engaged—and 'Oh! what could Mr. Morris think of her, and what would Horace think?' cried poor Maria, filled with remorse. And Mr. Morris cared for her so much; he had been so miserable when she had told him they must part, and said she was the only woman he had seen that he could care for; and that was the only reproach

he had uttered, though she had treated him so badly. And Horace did not care for her one bit now—she could see it, she knew it, he was tired of her, and she was not clever enough for him, and would never make him a good wife. All this our little-reticent Maria had sobbed out in answer to Mrs. Vavasour's sympathizing questions, with many entreaties to know what she had better do next. Mrs. Vavasour could only advise her to say to Horace just what she had said to her, and she had sufficient confidence in Maria's courage and good sense to trust that she would do so now, when matters had evidently come to a crisis. But it was with the keenest interest she awaited the end of their conversation.

She had not to wait very long. In a few minutes she saw Maria coming quickly across the lawn; she passed through the window and the room without looking up or speaking, and, with a little sob, disappeared. Graham followed more slowly, and sitting down by the table, moodily watched his sister's fingers moving rapidly to and fro.

"That is all over," he said at last.

"What is all over?" inquired Mrs. Vavasour.

"Everything between Maria and me. We have agreed upon one thing at last, at any rate."

"I am sure it is for the best, Horace," said Mrs. Vavasour, looking at him with her kind, gentle eyes.

"I don't see how anything should be for the best when one has behaved like a brute, and knows it," he answered, getting up, and beginning to walk up and down the room.

"Is it you who have been behaving like a brute, Horace? I cannot fancy that."

"I don't know why not," he answered gloomily; then, pausing in his walk, "No one knew of our engagement except ourselves and Aunt Barbara?" he asked.

"No one else was told."

"Well then, no great harm is done, so far as gossip goes. You had better write to Aunt Barbara. I shall go abroad at once."

"To this town on the Mediterranean?"

"Yes, I shall write to-night to B——; and I will start by the seven o'clock train to-morrow morning for London.

No one need get up; I will tell Jane to let me have some breakfast."

"We shall hear from you?"

"Yes, I will write when I am across the water. Good-bye."

He stooped down and kissed her as he spoke. She laid her hand on his arm, and detained him for a moment.

"Horace," she said, "you must not vex yourself too much about this; you and Maria have only discovered in time what numbers of people discover when it is too late—that you are not suited to each other. Believe me, it is far better to find it out before marriage than after."

"I daresay you are right," he said. "Don't be afraid, Georgie, I shall not vex myself too much, but at present the whole thing appears hateful to me, as far as I am concerned."

The next morning he was gone before any one of the family was stirring.

CHAPTER V.

Er, der Herrlichste von Allen.

"Ashurst, July, 186—.

"DEAR UNCLE HORACE,—Mamma has a bad headache, and says I am to write and ask you whether you have quite forgotten us, and if you are never coming to see us again. She says, cannot you come next week, because Lady Lorrimer's great ball is on the 31st. She and Cousin Madelon are going, and she would be very glad if you could escort them, as papa says he will not go. Cousin Madelon is here still, and Aunt Barbara is coming on Monday to stay with us for a little while before she goes back with her to Cornwall. Cousin Madelon has been reading French with me, and giving me music-lessons. We had a pic-nic in the woods last week, and my holidays begin to-morrow. I wish you would come back, Uncle Horace, and then we could have some fun before Cousin Madelon goes away. I wish she would never go, but stay here always, as Maria used. I have been reading some of your book; mamma said I might, and I like it very much. Mamma sends her love, and I am

"Your affectionate niece,

"MADGE VAVASOUR."

"Mamma says that she received yesterday the note that I enclose, and that she sends it to you to read."

The note was from Maria Leslie, and was dated from a country-town whither she had gone to stay with some friends shortly after Graham's departure from Ashurst:

"DEAREST GEORGIE,

"I feel that you are the first person to whom I should write the news that I am engaged to be married to Mr. Morris. He has just had the offer of a living in the north, and lost no time in coming to tell me of his prospects, and to invite me to share them. To you, who know him so well, I need say nothing of my own great happiness. I only fear that, after all that has passed, you may think I have been a little precipitate; but I could not but feel that something was due to Mr. Morris, and that it would be wrong to keep him in suspense. Send me

your good wishes and congratulations, dear Georgie, for I cannot feel that my happiness is complete without them.

"Ever your affectionate,

"MARIA LESLIE."

Graham arrived by the last available train on the evening of the 31st, and was told by Madge who came running into the hall to meet him, that mamma and Cousin Madelon were dressing, and would Uncle Horace have some dinner, or go and dress too? Uncle Horace said he had dined already, and would dress at once, and so disappeared upstairs with his portmanteau.

When he came down to the drawing-room, he found Mrs. Treherne sitting alone in the summer twilight at the open window.

"Is that you, Horace?" she said, putting out her hand; "you are quite a stranger here, I understand. Georgie says she has been jealous of my seeing so much of you in London."

"I think Georgie has no right to complain of me," he answered; "if there is a thing on earth I hate it's a ball—are you going, too, Aunt Barbara?"

"Indeed, no—I think you will have enough to do with two ladies; here comes one of them."

A tall, slender figure, moving through the dusk with her soft trailing draperies, and water-lilies in her brown hair: Graham had not seen her since that evening, more than three months ago, when she had looked up at him, and escaped in the midst of her unfinished song. They took each other's hands in silence now; a sudden consciousness and embarrassment seemed to oppress them both, and make the utterance of a word impossible.

Madelon was the first to speak; she went up to Mrs. Treherne.

"Can you see my flowers, Aunt Barbara?" she said; are they not pretty? Madge walked three miles to-day to the sedge ponds, on purpose to get them for me."

"Is Madge still your devoted friend?" Horace asked.

"Oh yes, Madge and I are always great friends. I must not expect all her attentions though, now that you are come back, Monsieur Horace."

The old childish name seemed to break the spell, and to bring back the old familiarity.

"And so you are going to a ball at last, Madelon," Graham said. "For the first time in my life I am sorry I cannot dance, for I shall be deprived of the pleasure of having you for a partner."

"Thank you," she said, "I should have liked to have danced with you very much; but, after all, it is in the intention that is the greatest compliment, so I will not mind too much. I think I will be very happy even if I do not dance at all."

She looked up at him for the first time, and even in the dusk he seemed to see the light in her eyes, the smile on her lips, the color flushing in her cheeks. It was not of the ball she was thinking—it was of him; she had felt the grasp of his kind hand, his voice was sounding in her ears, he had come back at last—at last.

"You have been away a long time, Monsieur Horace," she said softly, "but we have heard of you often; we have read your book, and the critiques upon it; it has been a great success, has it not? And then we have seen your name in the papers—at dinners, at scientific meetings—"

"Yes," said Graham, "I have been doing plenty of hard work lately; but I have come down into the country to be idle, and have some fun, as Madge would say. We will take our holidays together, will we not, Madge?" he added, as the child, followed by her mother, came into the room.

Lady Lorrimer's ball was the culminating point of a series of festivities given in honor of the coming of age of an eldest son. To ordinary eyes, I suppose, it was very like any other ball, to insure whose success no accessory is wanting that wealth and good taste can supply; but to our Madelon there was something almost bewildering in this scene at once so familiar and so strange; in these big, lighted, crowded rooms; in this music, whose every beat seemed to rouse a thousand memories and associations, linking the present with the so remote past. As for Madelon herself, she made a success, ideal almost, as if she had indeed been the enchanted Princess of little Madge's fairy tale. Something rare in the style of her beauty—something in her for-

eign air and appearance, distinguished her at once in the crowd of girls; she was sought after from the moment she entered the room, and the biggest personages present begged for an introduction to Miss Linders. The girl was not insensible to her triumphs; her cheeks flushed, her eyes brightened with excitement and pleasure. Once, in a pause of the waltz, she was standing with her partner close to where Graham was leaning against a wall. He had an air of being horribly bored, as indeed he was; but Madelon's eye caught his, and he was obliged to smile in answer to her look of radiant pleasure.

"You are enjoying yourself, I see, Madelon," he said.

"I never was so happy!" she cried. "Ah! if you knew how I love dancing!—and it is so many years since I have had a waltz!"

Later on in the evening, Lady Lorrimer, the fashionable, gay, kind-hearted hostess, came up to her.

"Miss Linders," she said, "I have a favor to ask of you. My aunt, Lady Adelaide Spencer, is passionately fond of music, and Mrs. Vavasour has been telling us how beautifully you sing. Would it be too much to ask you for one song? It is not fair, I know, in the midst of a ball, but the next dance is only a quadrille, I see—"

"I shall be most happy," says Madelon, blushing up, and following Lady Lorrimer down a long corridor into a music-room. There were not above a dozen people present when she began to sing; but the room was quite full before she rose from the piano. She sang one song after another, as it was asked for—French, German, English. The excitement of the moment, the sense of triumph and success, seemed to fill her with a sort of exultation; never had her voice been so true and powerful, her accent so pure, her expression so grand and pathetic; she sang as if inspired by the very genius of song.

"We must not be unconscionable, and deprive Miss Linders of all her dancing," said Lady Lorrimer at last—"you would like to go back to the ball-room now, would you not? But first let me introduce you to my aunt; she will thank you better than I can for your singing."

Lady Adelaide Spencer, the great lady of the neighbor-

hood, a short, stout, good-natured old woman in black velvet, and a grizzled front, gave Madelon a most flattering reception.

"Sit down and talk to me a little," she said. "I want to thank you again for your lovely voice and singing. It is not every young lady who would give up her dancing just for an old woman's caprice."

"Indeed I like singing as much as dancing," says Madelon.

"And you do both equally well, my dear; you may believe me when I tell you so, for I know what good dancing is, and I have been watching you all the evening. You must come and see me and sing to me again. You live with your aunt, Mrs. Treherne, Mrs. Vavasour tells me."

"Yes," replied Madelon.

"I knew Mrs. Treherne well years ago; tell her from me when you go home that an old woman has fallen in love with her pretty niece, and ask her to bring you to see me. She is staying at Ashurst, I believe?"

"Yes," said Madelon, "we are both at Dr. Vavasour's house. I have been there all the spring and summer, and Aunt Barbara has come for a few weeks before we go home to Cornwall."

"Do you live always in Cornwall?" asked Lady Adelaide. "Have you never been abroad? Your French and German in singing were quite perfect, but you seem to me to speak English with a foreign accent, and a very pretty one too."

"I was born abroad," answered Madelon—"I spent all the first part of my life on the Continent. I have been in England only five years."

"Ah, that accounts for it all, then. What part of the Continent do you come from?"

"I was born in Paris," says unthinking Madelon, "but we—I travelled about a great deal; one winter I was in Florence, and another in Nice, but I know Germany and Belgium best. I was often at Wiesbaden, and Homburg, and Spa."

"Very pretty places, all of them," said Lady Adelaide, "but so shockingly wicked! It is dreadful to think of the

company one meets there. Did you ever see the gambling tables, my dear? But I daresay not; you would of course be too young to be taken into such places."

"Yes, I have seen them," said Madelon, suddenly scarlet.

"My health obliges me to go to these baths from time to time," continued the old lady; "but the thought of what goes on in those Kursaals quite takes away any pleasure I might otherwise have; and the people who frequent the tables—the women and the men who go there night after night! I assure you my blood has run cold sometimes when one of those notorious gamblers has been pointed out to me, and I think of the young lives he may have ruined, the young souls he may have tempted to destruction. I myself have known some sad cases—I am sure you sympathize with me, Miss Linders?"

"Lady Adelaide," said a portly gentleman, coming up, will you allow me to take you into supper?"

"You will not forget to come and see me, my dear," cried Lady Adelaide, with a parting wave of her fan as she moved away, leaving the girl sitting there silent and motionless. People brushed by her as they left the room, but she paid no heed. Mrs. Vavasour spoke to her as she passed on her way to supper, but Madelon did not answer. All at once she sprang up, looking round as if longing to escape; as she did so, her eyes met Graham's; he was standing close to her, behind her chair, and something in his expression, something of sympathy, of compassion perhaps, made her cheeks flame, and her eyes fill with sudden tears of resentment and humiliation. He had heard them, he had heard every word that had been said, and he was pitying her! What right had he, what did she want with his compassion? She met his glance with one of defiance, and then turned her back upon him; she must remain where she was, she could not go out of the room alone, but, at any rate, he should not have the opportunity of letting her see that he pitied her.

Horace, however, who had in fact heard every word of the conversation, and perhaps understood Madelon's looks well enough, came up to her, as she stood alone watching the people stream by her out of the room.

"There is supper going on somewhere," he said; "will you come and have some, or shall I bring you an ice here?"

"Neither," she answered, quickly. "I—I don't want anything, and I would rather stay here."

"Perhaps you are right," he said. "We shall have the room to ourselves in a minute, and then it will be cooler."

In fact the room was nearly deserted—almost every one had gone away to supper. Madelon stood leaning against the window, half hidden by the curtain; the sudden gleam of defiance, of resentment against Horace, had faded; it had vanished at the sound of his kind voice, which she loved better than any other in the world. But there were tears of passion still in her eyes; her little moment of joyousness and triumph had been so cruelly dashed from her; she felt hurt, humiliated, almost exasperated.

"How hot it is!" she said, glancing round impatiently. "Where is every one gone? Cannot we go too? No, not in to supper. What is going on in that little room? I have not been there."

"It leads into the garden, I think," answered Graham. "Shall we see? Wait a moment. I will fetch you a shawl, and then, if you like, we can go out."

He strode off quickly. There was vexation and perplexity in his kind heart too. He understood well enough how the girl had been wounded—his little Madelon, for whom it would have seemed a small thing to give his right hand, could such a sacrifice have availed her aught. And he could do nothing. His compassion insulted her, his interference she would have resented; no, he could do nothing to protect his little girl. So he thought as he made his way into the cloak-room to extract a shawl. He was going his way in the world, and she hers, and she might be suffering, lonely, unprotected, for aught that he could do, unless—unless—

"Those cloaks belong to Lady Adelaide's party," cried the maid, as Graham recklessly seized hold of one in a bundle. "You must not take those, sir; Lady Adelaide will be going immediately."

"Confound the cloaks, and Lady Adelaide too!" cried

Graham impatiently. Here, give me something—anything. Where is Miss Linders' shawl? Which are Mrs. Vavasour's things?"

Madelon had stood still for a moment after Horace had left her, and then, as he did not immediately return, she left her station behind the window-curtain, and began walking up and down the room. "How tired I am!" she thought wearily. "Will this evening never end? Oh! I wish I had never come. I wish I were going away somewhere, anywhere, so that I should never see or hear again of anybody that knows anything about me. Why cannot we go home? It must be very late. I wonder what time it is? Perhaps there is a clock in here."

The door of the room which Graham had said led into the garden stood ajar; she pushed it open, and went in. It was a small room, with a glass door at the further end, and on this evening had been arranged for cards, so that Madelon, on entering, suddenly found herself in the midst of green-baize-covered tables, lighted candles, packs of cards, and a dozen or so of silent, absorbed gentlemen, intent upon the trumps and honors, points and odd tricks. The girl, already excited, and morbidly susceptible, stopped short at this spectacle, as one struck with a sudden blow. Not for years, not since that evening the memory of which ever came upon her with a sudden sting, when she had met Monsieur Horace at the gambling-tables of Spa, had Madelon seen a card; Mrs. Treherne never had them in her house; in those little parties of which mention has been made as her only dissipation, they had formed no part of the entertainment, and the sight of them now roused a thousand tumultuous emotions of pain and pleasure. A thousand associations attached themselves to those little bits of pasteboard, whose black and red figures seemed to dance before her eyes—recollections of those early years with their forever-gone happiness, of her father, of happy evenings that she, an innocent, unconscious child, had passed at his side, building houses with old packs of cards, or spinning the little gold pieces that passed backwards and forwards so freely. She was happy then, happier than she could ever be again, she thought despairingly, now that she had

been taught so sore a knowledge of good and evil. The last evening of her father's life came suddenly before her; she seemed to hear again his last words to herself, to see the scene with Legros, the cards tumbling in a heap on the floor, his dying face. A kind of terror seized her, and she stood gazing as though fascinated at the dozen respectable gentlemen dealing their cards and marking their games, till Graham's step and voice aroused her.

"Here is your shawl, Madelon," he said, putting it round her shoulders; "did you think I was never coming? That woman—"

He stopped short in his speech; she turned round and looked at him with her white, scared face, her wide-open, brown eyes, as if she had seen a ghost. Ghosts enough, indeed, our poor Madelon had seen during these last five minutes; but they were not visible to Graham, who stood sufficiently astonished and alarmed, as she turned abruptly away again, and disappeared through the glass door into the garden.

"Stay, Madelon!" he cried, and followed her out into the night

It was raining, he found, as soon as he got outside. The garden had been prettily illuminated with colored lamps hung along the verandah, and among the trees and shrubs, but they were nearly all extinguished now. It was a bleak, mournful night, summer time though it was, the wind moaning and sighing, the rain falling steadily. Graham, as he passed quickly along the sodden path, had a curious sensation of having been through all this before; another sad, rainy night came to his mind, a lighted street, a dark avenue, and a little passionate figure flying before him, instead of the tall, white one who moved swiftly on now, and finally disappeared beneath the long shoots of climbing plants that overhung a sort of summer-house at the end of a walk. The lamps were not all extinguished here; the wet leaves glistened as the wind swept the branches to and fro, and Horace, as he entered, could see Madelon sitting by the little table, trembling and shivering, her hair all blown about and shining in the uncertain light. What had suddenly come over her? Graham was fairly perplexed.

"Madelon," he said, going up to her, "what is the matter? has anything happened, or any one vexed you?"

"*Non, non,*" she cried, jumping up impatiently, and speaking in French as she sometimes did when excited, "*je n'ai rien—rien du tout;* leave me, Monsieur, I beg of you! How you weary me with your questions! I was rather hot, and came here for a little fresh air. That was all."

"You are cooler now," said Graham, as she stood drawing her shawl round her, her teeth chattering.

"Yes," she said, with a little shiver, "it is rather cold here, and damp; it is raining, is it not? Let us go back and dance. I adore dancing; it was papa who first taught it to me; do you know, Monsieur Horace? He taught me a great many things."

'You had better not dance any more,' said Graham, taking her little burning hand in his. "You are overheated already, and will catch cold."

She snatched away her hand impatiently.

"Ah, do not touch me!" she cried. "Let us go—why do we stay here? I do not want your prescriptions, Monsieur Horace. I *will* go and dance."

"Wait a minute," said Graham; "let me wrap your shawl closer round you, or you will be wet through: it is pouring with rain."

The friendly voice and action went to her heart, and seemed to reproach her for her harsh, careless words. They walked back in silence to the house; but when they reached the empty music-room again, she put both hands on his arm with an imploring gesture, as if to detain him.

"Don't go—don't leave me!" she said; "I am very wicked, Monsieur Horace, but—"

And then she dropped down on to a seat in the deep recess formed by the window.

The sight of her unhappiness touched Graham's heart with a sharper pang than anything else had power to do. He loved her so—this poor child—he would have warded off all unhappiness, all trouble from her life; and there she sat miserable before him, and it seemed to him he could not raise a finger to help her.

"You are not happy, Madelon," he said, at length. "Can I do nothing to help you?"

She raised her head and looked at him.

"Nothing, nothing!" she cried. "Ah, forgive me, Monsieur Horace, for speaking so to you; but you do not know you cannot understand how unhappy I am."

"But why, Madelon? What is it? Has any one spoken unkindly to you?"

"No, no, it is not that. You do not understand. Why do you come to me here? Why am I here at all? If people knew who and what I am, would they talk to me as they do? Supposing I had told Lady Adelaide just now—yes, you heard every word of that conversation—she would have despised me, as you pitied me, Monsieur Horace. Yes, you pitied me, I saw it in your eyes."

"My pity is not such as you need resent, Madelon," said Graham, with a sigh.

"I do not resent it," she answered hastily. You are kind, you are good; you do well to pity me. What am I? The daughter of a—a—yes, I know well enough now—I did not once, but I do now—and I am here in your society, among you all, on sufferance."

"You are wrong," answered Graham quickly, scarcely thinking of what he said. "In the first place, it can make no difference to any one that knows you who your father was; and then you are here as Mrs. Treherne's niece—"

"I am my father's daughter!" cried Madelon, blazing up, "and I must not own it. Yes, yes, I understand it all. As Mrs. Treherne's niece I may be received, but not as—Oh, papa, papa!" her voice suddenly breaking down, "why did you die? why did you leave me all alone?"

Graham stood silent. He felt so keenly for her; he had so dreaded for her the time when this knowledge of her father's true character must come home to her. In his wide sympathy with everything connected with her, he had regrets for that poor father also, dead years ago, who in his last hours had so plainly foreseen some such moment as this, and yet not quite, either.

"Monsieur Horace," Madelon went on wildly, "I did so love papa, and he loved me—ah, you cannot imagine how much! When I think of it now, when I see other fathers with their children, how little they seem to care for them in

comparison, I wonder at his love for me. He nursed me, he played with me, he took such care of me, he made me so happy. I think sometimes if I could only hear his voice once more, and see him smiling at me as he used to smile —and I must not speak of him, I must not even mention him. It is unjust, it is cruel. I do not want to live with people who will not let me think of my father."

"You may speak of him to me, Madelon—"

"To you?" she said, interrupting him; "ah, you knew him—you know how he loved me. But Aunt Barbara—she will not let me even mention his name."

"Then she is very wrong and very foolish," Graham answered hastily. "Listen to me, Madelon. You are making yourself miserable for nothing. To begin with, if everybody in the room to-night knew who your father was, and all about him, I don't suppose it would make the least difference; and as for the rest, you have no occasion to concern or distress yourself about anything in your father's life, except what relates to yourself. Whatever he may have been to others, he was the kindest and most loving of fathers to you, and that is all you need think about."

"But Aunt Barbara—"

"Never mind Aunt Barbara. If she chooses to do what you and I think foolish we will not follow her example. You may talk to me, Madelon, as much as ever you please. I should like to hear about your father, for I know how often you think of him. Now, will you go back to the ball-room? I will give you leave to dance now," he added, smiling.

She did not move nor answer, but she looked up at him with a sudden change in her face, and he saw that she was trembling.

"What is it now, Madelon?" he said.

"You are so good," she said. "When I am unhappy, you always comfort me—it has always been so—"

"Do I comfort you?" said Graham—"why, that is good news, Madelon."

"Ah! yes," she cried, in her impulsive way, "you have always been good to me—how can I forget it? That night when papa died, and I was so unhappy all alone—and since then, how often—"

Graham turned away, and walked twice up and down the room. There was a distant sound of music, and footsteps, and voices, but people had drifted away into the ballroom again, and they were alone. He came back to where Madelon was sitting.

"If you think so, indeed, Madelon," he said, "will you not let it be so always? Do you think you can trust me enough to let me always take care of you? I can ask for nothing dearer in life."

"What do you mean?" she cried, glancing up at him startled.

"Do you not understand?" he said, looking at her, and taking one of her little hands in his—"do you not understand that one may have a secret hidden away for years, and never suspected even by oneself, perhaps, till all at once one discovers it? I think I must have had some such secret, Madelon, and that I never guessed at it till a few months since, when I found a little girl that I knew years ago grown up into somebody that I love better than all the world—"

"Ah! stop!" she cried, jumping up and pulling her hand away. "You are good and kind, but it is not possible that you—ah! Monsieur Horace, I am not worthy!"

"Not worthy! Good heavens, Madelon, you not worthy!" He paused for a moment. "What is not possible?" he went on. "Perhaps I am asking too much. I am but a battered old fellow in these days, I know, and if indeed you cannot care enough for me—"

He held out his hand again with a very kind smile. She looked up at him.

"Monsieur Horace," she said, "I—I do—"

And then she put both her hands into his with her old, childish gesture, and I daresay the little weary spirit thought it had found its rest at last.

CHAPTER VI.

Mrs. Treherne's Forgiveness.

MRS. TREHERNE was sitting in the drawing-room of her London house. The window was open to the hot dusty street, long shadows lay upon the deserted pavement, the opposite houses were all closed, and no sound disturbed the stillness of the September evening but the shouts of the children, as they played up and down the steps, and under the porticos of the houses, and the bells of the Westminster clocks chiming one quarter after another. Through the half-drawn curtains that hung between the two drawing-rooms she could see Graham and Madelon sitting together, looking out upon the Park, as they talked in low tones, and a sudden sadness filled her heart. They were to be married next week, and go abroad at once, while she returned to Cornwall; and the even current of a lonely life, that had been stirred and altered in its course five years ago, would return to its original channel, to be disturbed, perhaps, no more.

It was of these five years that Mrs. Treherne was thinking now, and of others, perhaps, beyond them again, when she too had been young, and beloved, and happy. There are some lives which, in their even tenor of mild happiness, seem to glide smoothly from one scattered sorrow to another, so that to the very end some of the hopefulness and buoyancy of youth are retained; but there are others in which are concentrated in one brief space those keen joys and keener sorrows that no one quite survives, which, in passing over us take from us our strongest vitality, our young capacity for happiness and suffering alike. Such a life had been Mrs. Treherne's. She had been a woman of deep affections and passions, and they all lay buried in those

early years that had taken from her her husband, and children, and friend, and it was only a dim shadow of her former self that moved, and spoke, and lived in these latter days.

It was an old story with her now, however. She did not envy these two happy people who were talking together in the next room. It was of Madelon she was thinking most, thinking sadly enough that in all these years she had not been able to win the girl's heart. When she had first seen the child of the friend who in all the world had been most dear to her, she had promised herself that, for Magdalen's sake, she would take her home and bring her up as her own daughter; and she had kept her promise, but she had failed in making her happy. She knew it now, when she contrasted the Madelon of to-day, going about with the light in her eyes, and the glad ring in her voice, with the Madelon of six months ago. She had not been able to make her happy, and she would leave her without a regret; and the thought gave Mrs. Treherne a sharper pang than she had felt for many a day.

And meanwhile this was what Madelon was saying—

"In another month, Madelon," Graham had said to her, "we shall be at L——, and you will be looking out on the blue skies that you have so often longed for."

"Yes," she replied, "and then perhaps I shall be thinking of the gray ones I have left behind; I shall be sorry to leave England after all. I will pay your country so much of a compliment as that, Monsieur Horace, or rather I shall be sorry to leave some of the English people—Aunt Barbara, I do not like to think of her all alone; she will miss me, she says."

"I should not wonder if she did, Madelon."

"I do not know why she should; I think I have been ungrateful to her; she has been so good, so kind to me, why have I not been able to love her more? Where should I have been if she had not taken care of me? and such care! If I lived to be a hundred I could never repay all she has done, and now I am going away to be happy, and she will be lonely and sad."

"We will ask her to come and see us, some day, at

L——. I saw a house when I was there that would suit us exactly, and it has a room, which shall be sometimes for Aunt Barbara, sometimes for Madge. It has an open gallery, and an outside staircase leading down to the garden, which will delight Madge's small mind."

"Like my room at Le Trooz," cried Madelon. "Ah! how glad I am that you can go there first, and that I shall see Jeanne-Marie again; if only we do not find her ill—it is so long since I have heard from her, and she used to write so regularly."

"For my part," said Graham, "I wish to see the hotel at Chaudfontaine, where I first met a small person who was very rude to me, I remember."

"And your wish will not be gratified, sir, for the season will be over by next month and the hotel closed for the winter. I am sorry for that, but I wonder you can wish to see a place where any one was rude to you—now with me of course it is different."

"In what way, Madelon?"

"Ah! that I will not tell you—but we will go to the convent at Liége, Monsieur Horace; I would like to see Sœur Lucie again. Poor Sœur Lucie—but it is sad to think that she is always there making her confitures—there are so many other things to be done in the world."

"For example?"

"Joining a marching regiment," she said, looking at him half laughing, half shyly. "Monsieur Horace, where will you go when you are tired of L——? You will be tired of it some day, I know, and so shall I. Where will you go next?"

"I don't know," he answered; "you see, Madelon, in taking a wife, I undertake a certain responsibility; I can't go marching about the world as if I were a single man."

"You don't mean that!" she cried, "if I thought you meant that, I—I—ah, why do you tease me?" she added, as Graham could not help laughing, "you know you promised me I should go with you everywhere. I am very strong, I love travelling, I want to see the world. Where will you go? To America again? I will adopt the customs and manners of any country; I will dress in furs with a seal-

skin cap, and eat blubber like an Esquimaux, or turn myself into an Indian squaw; would you like to have me for a squaw, Monsieur Horace? I would learn all their duties; I believe they carry their husband's game, and never speak till they are spoken to. My ideas are very vague. But I would learn—ah, yes, I could learn anything.

Mrs. Treherne was still sitting, thinking her sad thoughts, when she felt an arm passed round her neck, and turning round, saw Madelon kneeling at her side. "Horace has gone out," she said; "we have been talking over our plans, Aunt Barbara; we have settled quite now that we will first go to Liége and Le Trooz, and see Jeanne-Marie, and then go on to the south. It is good of Monsieur Horace to go to Liége, for it is all to please me, and it is quite out of his way."

"And you go on to L—— afterwards? You will be glad to find yourself abroad again, Madeleine."

"Yes," she said, hesitating; "but I shall be sorry to leave you, Aunt Barbara."

"Will you, my dear? I am afraid, Madeleine, that I have not made you very happy, though I have only found it out in these last few weeks."

"Aunt Barbara, how can you say such a thing?" cried Madelon. "What have you not done for me? Why, I could never, never thank you for it all; it is for that—because it is so much—that I cannot say more. One cannot use the same words that one does for ordinary things."

"I know, my dear," said Mrs. Treherne, smoothing the girl's hair, "but nevertheless I have not made you happy, and I now know the reason why. Yes, I have been talking to Horace, and I understand your feeling; and if it were all to come again, perhaps I might act differently; but it is too late now, and it matters little, since you are happy at last."

"Aunt Barbara, I have been happy—"

"You see Madeleine, your mother was my very dearest friend; all your love has been for your father, and that is only natural; but some day, perhaps, you will understand what a mother might have been to you, and then, my dear, you will care for me also a little, knowing how dearly I loved yours."

"I know," said Madelon, "and I do love you, Aunt Barbara, but I must always care for papa most of all."

"I know, my dear; it is only natural, and from what Horace tells me, he must have deserved your love." And with those words, Mrs. Treherne in some sort forgave the man who had been the one hatred of her life, and won the heart of the girl beside her.

"Aunt Barbara," she cried again, "I do love you." And this time Mrs. Treherne believed her.

CHAPTER VII.

Conclusion.

THE hotel at Chaudfontaine was closed for the winter. Every window in the big white building was shuttered, every door barred; the court-yard was empty; not a footstep, nor a voice resounded. Nevertheless, an open carriage from Liége stopped in front of the gate, and two people getting out, proceeded to look through the iron bars of the railing.

"Was I not right?" said Madelon. "I told you, Horace, it would be closed for the winter, and so it is."

"I don't care in the least," he replied. "If it affords me any gratification, Madelon, to look through the railings into that court-yard, I don't see why I should not have it."

"Oh! by all means," she answered; "but it is just a little tame, is it not?—for a sentimental visit, to be looking through these iron bars."

"That is the very place where I sat," said Graham, not heeding her, "and took you on my knee."

"I don't remember anything about it, Monsieur Horace—"

"Nothing, Madelon?"

"Well, perhaps—you gave me a fish, I remember—it was the fish that won my heart; and I have it still, you see."

"Oh! then, your heart was won?"

"A little," she answered, glancing up at him for a moment; and then, moving on, she said, "See here, Horace, this is the hawthorn-bush under which I slept that morning after I had run away from the convent. How happy I was to have escaped! I remember standing at this gate afterwards eating my bread, and that dreadful woman came out of the hotel."

"Is there no way of getting in?" said Graham, shaking the gate.

"None, I am afraid," Madelon answered. "Stay, there used to be a path that led round at the back across a little bridge into the garden. Perhaps we might get in that way."

They were again disappointed; they found the path, and the wooden bridge that crossed the stream, but another closed gate prevented their entering the garden.

"This, however, becomes more and more interesting," said Graham, after looking at the spot attentively. "Yes, this is the very place, Madelon, where I first saw you with a doll in your arms."

"Really!" she said.

"Yes, really; and then some one—your father, I think—called you away."

They were silent for a minute, looking at the trees, the shrubs, the grass growing all rough and tangled in the deserted garden.

"We must go," Graham said at last; "it is getting late, Madelon, and we have to drive back to Liége, remember, after we have seen Jeanne-Marie."

They got into the carriage again, and drove on towards Le Trooz, along the valley under the hills, all red and brown with October woods, beside the river, gleaming between green pastures in the low afternoon sun. They had arrived at Liége the day before, and that morning was to have been devoted to visiting the convent; but the convent was gone. On inquiry, they learnt that the nuns had removed to another house ten miles distant from Liége, and on the hills where the old farm-house, the white, low-roofed convent had once stood so peacefully, a great iron-foundry was smoking and spouting fire day and night, covering field and garden with heaps of black smouldering ashes.

"How places and things change!" said Madelon, as they drove along; "we have had two disappointments to-day—shall we have a third, I wonder? Suppose Jeanne-Marie should have gone to live in another house? Ah! how glad I shall be to see her again!—and she will be pleased to see me, I know."

As she spoke, the scattered houses, the church, the white

cottages of Le Trooz came in sight. Madelon checked the driver as they approached the little restaurant, the first house in the village, and she and Graham got out of the carriage. The bench still stood before the door, the pigeons were flying about, and the bee-hives were on their stand, but the blue board was gone from the white wall, and the place had a deserted look.

"It is strange," said Madelon. She pushed open the door that stood ajar, and went into the little public room; it was empty; the table shoved away into one corner, the chairs placed against the wall—no signs of the old life and occupation.

"Can Jeanne-Marie have gone away, do you think?" said Madelon, almost piteously. "I am sure she cannot be here."

"I will inquire," said Graham.

He went out into the road, and stopped a little girl of ten or twelve years, who was walking towards the village with a pitcher of water.

"Do you know whether the woman who lived in this house has left?" he asked. "Jeanne-Marie she was called, I think?"

The child stared up at the strange gentleman with the foreign accent. "Jeanne-Marie that used to live here?" she said. "She is dead."

"Dead!" cried Madelon. The tears came rushing into her eyes. "Ah! why did I not know? I would have come if I had known. When did she die?"

"More than a month ago," the girl answered; "she died here in this house."

"And who lives here now?" inquired Graham.

"Jacques Monnier—he that works at the factory now. He is out all day; but his wife should be here."

And in fact, at the sound of the voices, the door leading into the kitchen opened, and a young woman appeared.

"Pardon," said Madelon, going forward; "we came here to inquire for Jeanne-Marie; but she—she is dead, we hear."

"Yes, she is dead," the woman replied; then, in answer to further questions, told how Jeanne-Marie, when she was

taken ill, refused to let any one be written to, or sent for, and had died alone at last with no one near her but a hired nurse. "She left enough money for her burial, and to have a wooden cross put on her grave," said the woman, "and asked M. le Curé to see that all her things were sold, and the money given to the poor."

"Is she buried here?" said Madelon. "Horace, should like to see her grave."

"Louise, there, can show it to you," says Madame Monnier, pointing to the child; "run home with your water, *ma petite*, and then come back and show Monsieur and Madame the road to the church-yard."

"And I have a favor to beg," said Madelon, turning to the woman again. "I knew Jeanne-Marie well; she was very kind to me at one time. Might I see the room in which she died? It is upstairs, is it not, with the window opening on to the steps leading into the garden?"

The woman consented civilly enough, concealing any astonishment she might feel at this tall, beautiful lady, who had come to inquire after Jeanne-Marie; and Madelon left Graham below, and went up alone to the little bed-room, where she had spent so many hours. It was hardly altered. The bed stood in the old place; the vines clustered round the window. Madelon's heart was full of sorrow; she had loved Jeanne-Marie so much, and more and more perhaps, as years went on, and she had learnt to understand better all that the woman had done for her—and she had died alone—she who had saved her life.

When she came down again Louise had reappeared, and was waiting to conduct them to the church-yard. The child went on in front, and they followed her in silence down the village street. It was already evening, the sun had sunk behind the hills; the men were returning from their work; the children were playing and shouting, and the women stood gossiping before their doors. All was life and animation in the little village, where a strange, silent woman had once passed to and fro, with deeds and words of kindness for the suffering and sorrowful, but who would be seen there no more.

"There is the grave," says Louise, pointing it out to

them. It was in a corner of the little grave-yard; the earth was still fresh over it, and the black cross at its head was one of the newest among the hundred similar ones round about. Graham dismissed the child with a gratuity, and he and Madelon went up to the grave. There was no name, only the initials J. M. R. painted on the cross beneath the three white tears, and the customary "*Priez pour elle!*" Some one had hung up a wreath of immortelles, and a rose-tree, twined round a neighboring cross, had shed its petals above Jeanne-Marie's head.

Madelon knelt down and began to pull out some weeds that had sprung up, while Graham stood looking on. Long afterwards, one might fancy, would that hour still live in his memory—the peaceful stillness brooding over the little grave-yard, the sunset sky, the sheltering hills, the scent of the falling roses, and Madelon, in her dark dress, kneeling by the grave. Her task was soon accomplished, but she knelt on motionless. Who shall say of what she was thinking? Something perhaps of the real meaning of life, of its great underlying sadness, ennobled by patient suffering, by unselfish devotion, for presently she turned round to Graham.

"Oh, Horace," she said, "help me to be good; I am not, you know, but I would like to be—and you will help me."

"My little Madelon!" he raised her up, he took her in his arms. "We will both try to be good, with God's help. The world is all before us, to work in, and do our best—we will do what we can; with God's help, I say, we will do what we can."

They drove swiftly back towards Liége, the air blew freshly in their faces, the sunset colors faded, the stars came out one by one. As they vanish from our sight, they seem to fade into the mysterious twilight land. For them, as for us, other suns will rise, other days will dawn, but we shall have no part in them; between them and us falls the darkness of an eternal separation.

THE END.

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